

**"A Colour Line Affair"**  
**Race, Imperialism and Rugby Football Contacts between**  
**New Zealand and South Africa to 1950.**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to construct an alternative tradition of New Zealand and South African rugby football contacts to 1950. It examines the wider social conditions of such contacts, unlike the existing plethora of rugby-centred chronicles of matches, tours, and sporting personalities. Rugby tours between New Zealand and South Africa before 1950 raised questions over the relationship between sport, race and imperialism. The manner that rugby reflected the divergent racial traditions in both societies thus challenges the cliché that sport is separate from wider social and political considerations.

The thesis consists of an introduction, conclusion and four chapters. The chapters correlate with the New Zealand and South African rugby exchanges of 1921, 1928, 1937, and 1949. They are dominated by the themes of race relations and sporting imperialism, which form the context of the tours. Research is based on New Zealand newspaper sources; contextual material is derived from secondary sources.

## INTRODUCTION

Rugby football contacts between New Zealand and South Africa during the twentieth century has produced conflicting analysis from New Zealand society. To some, New Zealand and South African rugby tours were a traditional sporting rivalry that usually determined the leading international rugby power. By this account, test matches and series between the two countries have become part of rugby folklore. Increasingly however, New Zealand and South African rugby relations came to be seen not so much in sporting terms as in political and racial ones. New Zealanders, somewhat reluctantly according to some, became more aware that South African rugby was a microcosm of its wider society. Like all aspects of South African society, rugby was segregated along white-constructed divisions of 'race', referred to commonly as 'apartheid'.<sup>1</sup> The centrality of rugby to New Zealand male society - both Maori and 'Pakeha' (New Zealanders of European descent) - led New Zealand to lag behind the rest of the world in recognising South Africa's status as an international sporting and cultural pariah.

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<sup>1</sup> Apartheid is an extreme form of legal, political and social discrimination imposed by white South Africa onto the majority 'black' (African, Indian and mixed or 'Coloured' lineage) population.

The tension between race, politics and sport in relation to New Zealand and South African rugby was at its greatest during the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand. The turmoil of the 1981 tour divided New Zealand society sharply. 'Pro-tour' supporters viewed rugby between New Zealand and South Africa as a traditional sporting occasion. They believed in the separation of sport and politics, and considered apartheid as a purely South African (and thus separate) issue. 'Anti-tour' supporters, in contrast, saw sporting contacts with South Africa within the context of human rights and apartheid. Such contacts, they believed, represented support for apartheid sport and society, and undermined a worldwide sporting and cultural boycott of South Africa.

New Zealand opposition to sporting contacts with South Africa on the basis of apartheid had increased rapidly during the mid-1960s. Hitherto, New Zealand and South African rugby tours aroused minimal criticism. Furthermore, such criticism was based on the relatively narrow issue of Maori sporting rights in South Africa. Maori rugby players were excluded from the 1928, 1949 and 1960 All Black teams that toured South Africa by the New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU). From a strictly rugby perspective, Maori exclusion from the 1928 and 1949 tours in particular, ensured that several outstanding All Blacks never played against South Africa. The 1928 All Blacks toured without George Nepia (one of the all-time 'greats' of New Zealand rugby) and Jimmy Mill.

Furthermore, Vince Bevan, Johnny Smith, Peter Smith and Ben Couch were excluded from the 1949 All Blacks. In addition to Maori rugby players, a pre-Great War All Black of Anglo/West Indian lineage, 'Ranji' Wilson, was excluded from the 1919 New Zealand Imperial Services rugby tour of South Africa.

The exclusion of Nepia and other Maori All Blacks was felt immediately on the playing field. The 1928 and 1949 All Blacks drew and lost their respective test match series against the Springboks. Maori exclusion from rugby tours of South Africa was also a blatant discrepancy in relation to the context of New Zealand race relations. New Zealand, through the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, enshrined the equal citizenship of Maori and Pakeha. While the Treaty failed to guarantee social and economic parity for Maori, 'equality' between Maori and Pakeha was part of the generally proclaimed egalitarian ethos.

The degree to which Maori involved themselves in the rugby world was held, in some quarters, to be a mark of their assimilation of English customs. Rugby was not cricket but it was nonetheless part of the panoply of English games which were held to instil appropriate forms of social behaviour. At the same time, the high level of success on the rugby field by Maori players was commonly taken as an indicator of the wider European society's success in carrying Maori with them to egalitarian heights. This tension between egalitarian and assimilationist tendencies runs through the history of

New Zealand and South African rugby relations.

The exclusion of Maori players from the 1928 and 1949 tours of South Africa was opposed by a vocal minority of New Zealanders. The majority of rugby followers, on the other hand, accepted that the 1928 and 1949 teams had to conform to South African social customs. Critics of Maori exclusion, nevertheless, remained limited in number until the late 1950s. Opponents of the 1960 'All White' All Black tour of South Africa organised protest meetings, petitions, leaflet distribution and public demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> The 1960 tour was the last in which Maori were excluded. Subsequent All Black tours of South Africa, such as those of 1970, 1976 and 1992, included players of Maori and Pacific Island lineage.

Whereas Maori sporting rights attracted growing debate before 1950, New Zealand and South African rugby contacts were often interpreted by middle class New Zealand commentators within an imperialist context. Newspaper editors, rugby officials and conservative politicians regarded such tours as occasions which emphasised the British cultural heritage of New Zealand and South Africa. The tours also formed part of an imperial sporting network consisting of Britain and the

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<sup>2</sup> R. Thompson, *Retreat From Apartheid*, 1975, pp. 22-24.



'white Dominions' (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa).<sup>3</sup> The sporting empire was itself the product initially of British tours of the Dominions, and reciprocal Dominion tours of the 'old country'. The commencement of imperial sporting tours involving Britain raised the prospect of similar contacts between the Dominions.<sup>4</sup> Yet, in comparison to cricket, rugby failed to construct a sporting network which was independent of Britain until the 1921 Springbok tour of New Zealand.<sup>5</sup>

The prospect of rugby relations between New Zealand and South Africa raised the question of racial controversy within sport and wider society. New Zealand and South African sport and society were distinguished by their divergent views on their respective indigenous populations. Inclusion was the cornerstone of New Zealand sport, especially rugby. From the late nineteenth century, Maori and Pakeha often played alongside and

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<sup>3</sup> B. Stoddart, "Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire", *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 1988, pp. 650, 654; K. Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians*, 1994, pp. 144-147.

<sup>4</sup> R. Archer and A. Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 1982, p. 81. The South African cricket team made three tours of England before 1910, while England toured South Africa in 1905-06. The Australian cricket team toured South Africa in 1902-03, and South Africa reciprocated by touring Australia in 1910-11.

<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Rugby Football Union Management Committee Minutes, 11 November 1911; Referee, 26 November 1913. The NZRFU made several attempts to arrange rugby contacts with South Africa before 1914. It was unsuccessful in obtaining Springbok tours during 1912 and 1914. A 1915 Springbok tour of New Zealand in 1915 was considered by the South African Rugby Board (SARB), but came to nothing with the beginning of the Great War.

against each other. Maori players also featured at all levels of rugby, from secondary school to international level.<sup>6</sup> The first New Zealand team that toured Britain, the 1888 'Natives', included 21 players who were Maori or part-Maori.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Maori players such as Tom Ellison captained New Zealand teams following the beginning of 'official' (NZRFU-sanctioned) tours.<sup>8</sup>

South African sport and society, unlike New Zealand, was underpinned by racial segregation and exclusion. The black (African, 'Coloured' and Indian) majority was denied economic, political, and social opportunity by the ruling white minority. They participated in British team sports such as rugby,<sup>9</sup> although never alongside whites (until the late twentieth century). Black sportspeople initially saw white sports, especially cricket and rugby, as a means of entry into white society.<sup>10</sup> African and 'Coloured' rugby administrations were established between

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<sup>6</sup> G. Ryan, *'The Originals': The 1888-89 New Zealand Native Football Team in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand*, 1992, p. 6; R. Chester and N. McMillan, *The Encyclopedia of New Zealand Rugby*, 1981, p. 347.

<sup>7</sup> Ryan, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Chester and McMillan, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 67, 186-187, 347.

<sup>9</sup> A. Odendaal, "South Africa's Black Victorians", in J. Mangan (Ed), *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism*, 1988, pp. 199-200. A 'Coloured' cricketer, Krom Hendricks, was selected, but subsequently omitted from the 1894 South African cricket tour of England.

<sup>10</sup> Odendaal, pp. 199-200.

1890 and 1910.<sup>11</sup> The emergence of black South African rugby, however, had little impact on the racial composition of Springbok teams. Such teams remained exclusively white and represented the 'official' South African Rugby Board (SARB).

The opposing racial traditions of New Zealand and South Africa was alluded to, at times, by sporting commentators as rugby contacts between the two countries developed. It was the basis for the NZRFU's exclusion of Maori players from the 1928 and 1949 All Black tours of South Africa. Furthermore, it sparked the prospect of cultural controversy during the 1921 and 1937 Springbok tours of New Zealand. The 1921 tour produced a major cultural incident through the 'Blackett cablegram', which objected to contact between Springbok and Maori players. A proposed Maori boycott of the 1937 tour was averted by guarantees from the SARB that they would treat Maori as equals.

The negation of Maori sporting rights enabled the continuation of rugby relations between New Zealand and South Africa. Yet, sporting commentators initially observed such relations as imperialist events. The 1921 Springbok tour, in particular, was hailed as an occasion which emphasised Empire solidarity. The South African players were welcomed in a manner similar to royalty.

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<sup>11</sup> Archer and Bouillon, pp. 58-59; Odendaal, p. 199. The South African Colonial Rugby Football Board was established in 1896, and was dominated by 'Coloured' teams. In addition, the Eastern Province 'Native' (African) Rugby Board was formed in 1905.

Subsequent tours failed to generate the overt imperialism of 1921, although the sporting imperative prevailed. They were seen by New Zealanders and South Africans alike as determining world rugby supremacy. The tours increasingly came to be described in internationalist and sporting terms, rather than imperialist ones. Hence, rugby was promoted as a means of building 'friendships' and increasing 'mutual knowledge' among all peoples.

Rugby tours involving South Africa, at times, served a wider political objective. South African commentators, on occasions, alluded to rugby as a means of achieving unity between the 'races'. Their concept of 'race' was restricted to Anglo and Afrikaner South Africans, and excluded black South Africans. Anglos and Afrikaners played alongside each other in South African teams before the Boer Republics (Transvaal, Orange Free State) and British colonies (Cape, Natal) were unified by the 1910 Act of Union.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, imperial politics shaped the views of those who supported sporting contacts with South Africa. Between 1902 (the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War) and 1914, South Africa enjoyed regular rugby and cricket tours with Britain and Australia. Moreover, they generally coincided with, or followed South African political milestones such as the 1902 Treaty of

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<sup>12</sup> C. Greyvenstein, *Springbok Saga: A Pictorial History from 1891*, 1981, p. 39. The notion of Anglo-Afrikaner 'conciliation' was visible during the first (1906-07) Springbok tour of Britain. The team's captain, Paul Roos spoke of the players as 'a band of happy South Africans', rather than Anglos or Afrikaners.

Vereeniging and 1910 Act of Union.<sup>13</sup>

The inherent amateurism of South African rugby players prompted much discussion from sporting commentators. Their social background resembled closely that of their English, Irish and Scottish rugby counterparts. The typical Springbok player came from a middle class background, had a private school (and often a university) education. Afrikaner Springboks, in particular, were often graduates of the University of Stellenbosch. And it is notable that Afrikaner society prized amateurism as much as did the English middle classes. The Afrikaner held, as Archer and Bouillon point out, an aversion to 'all that was capitalist';<sup>14</sup> money would turn play into work and diminish its ideological purpose.

The middle class and amateur context of South African rugby ensured that it was more congenial to the British than was New Zealand rugby. The Springboks were invited to tour Britain twice before 1914 (1906-07, 1912-13), whereas the All Blacks toured only in 1905-06. It remains plausible that South African rugby was rewarded for its apparent amateurism and social elitism. The New Zealand game, on the other hand, was suspected of encouraging professionalism. New Zealand teams, especially the 1905-06 All Blacks, faced such

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<sup>13</sup> See Archer and Bouillon, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

allegations. They seemed to play to win 'at all costs'.<sup>15</sup> The players' social origins was also more egalitarian than their British and South African rivals. Their background resembled that of rugby players from Wales and the professional Northern Union (Rugby League). The apparent similarity, furthermore, was not lost upon the British.

The investment of imperialist status into rugby contacts between Britain, South Africa and New Zealand, was subsequently extended to the British Empire Games. A greater number of countries and colonies took part in the Empire Games than rugby and cricket tours. The Games' commencement in 1930 also drew the question of South African attitudes to race even more widely into the sporting arena. Before the 1930s, little discussion over South African sporting segregation had taken place. However, Empire Games teams from African, West Indian and Asian colonies would be prevented from competing in South Africa due to segregation. Racial controversy was, nonetheless, avoided when the 1934 Empire Games was taken away from Johannesburg.

The growing Afrikaner role in rugby was to introduce into South African rugby politics a form of nationalism

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<sup>15</sup> B. Dobbs, *Edwardians at Play: Sport 1890-1914*, 1973, pp. 110-111, 115. New Zealand teams employed a seven player (2-3-2) scrum and 'wing forward' position, instead of the customary eight player scrum. The wing forward was seen by British commentators as illegal and contrary to the 'amateur spirit' of rugby. The 1906-07 and 1912-13 Springbok teams did not play a wing forward, and packed an eight player (3-3-2) scrum.

which was diametrically opposed to the imperialism that had launched the game. Whereas emergent New Zealand nationalism was to some degree expressed in terms of a continuing British connection, Afrikaner nationalism was imbued with an element of anti-British thought. South African test and touring teams invariably included Afrikaner players (often Stellenbosch University graduates or Stellenbosch club players). They initially reflected the ethnic divisions of white South Africa (Afrikaners outnumbered Anglos by approximately two to one). Afrikaner representation in the Springboks increased steadily following the Great War, and Afrikaners were usually chosen as Springbok captains. The greater number of Afrikaner Springboks also coincided with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism as a dominant political force. Consequently, rugby contacts with New Zealand, according to some, became a sporting re-enactment of the Anglo-Boer War.

The unfolding of rugby tours between New Zealand and South Africa raised wider questions relating to New Zealand race relations. The tours ensured that inclusionist (New Zealand) and segregationist (South Africa) cultures, reflected through their rugby teams, would clash. Notwithstanding the Blackett cablegram, Springbok touring teams generally respected the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand society. All Black teams also respected South African social customs, and usually overlooked the clear inequalities between black

and white South Africans. The reaction of New Zealand commentators to the racial beliefs of white South Africa, however, was tinged with social darwinist overtones. Maori and Pakeha spokespeople accepted the notion that some races were innately superior to others. They were abhorred when South Africans expressed discriminatory views against Maori. Their indignation, however, overlooked segregation against black South Africans. To some New Zealanders - Maori and Pakeha - black South Africans stood somewhere below the level of the Maori.

An analysis of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa to 1950 demonstrates that they were more than simply sporting occasions. They revealed the manner in which rugby as a sport was invested with quite different attitudes and assumptions in New Zealand and South Africa. Rugby tours between the two countries brought into focus wider political and racial questions. More often than not, New Zealand and South Africa diverged sharply over imperialist and racial questions. These differences were apparent during rugby tours between the two countries. Racial issues, in particular, came to dominate New Zealand and South African rugby contacts. New Zealand was required to surrender its inclusionist ethos in relation to race, to allow its sporting relationship with South Africa to develop. In comparison, South Africa maintained its segregationist ethos throughout its sporting relationship with New



Zealand until the early 1990s.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The 1921 Springbok Tour of New Zealand:

*'This was the most unfortunate match ever played.'*  
(Charles Blackett)

Imperial and racial themes dominated the social context of the 1921 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand. Middle class New Zealand commentators viewed the 1921 tour as a major imperial sporting occasion between New Zealand and South Africa. However, the most infamous event of the tour was the publication of the 'Blackett cablegram', which described the Springbok-New Zealand Maori XV game as 'the most unfortunate match ever played'. It also claimed that the Springboks were 'disgusted' at the sight of local spectator support for 'a band of coloured men'. When the Blackett cablegram was leaked to the New Zealand press, eminent Maori and Pakeha spokespeople were incensed by the racist slur against the Maori XV. Hitherto, the Springboks were willing guests at several hui (Maori gatherings). The Springbok manager, Harold Bennett, was obliged to repudiate the involvement of his players and expose Blackett as the cablegram's author. The controversy, nonetheless, was to simmer for years to come.

Race relations had thus emerged as a central theme within New Zealand and South African sporting relations. During the previous decade, the NZRFU had rejected a proposal for a tour by a South African 'Coloured' ('mixed' race) rugby team in 1911. The Rugby Union would only host teams affiliated with the white-only South African Rugby Board (SARB).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a former All Black, Ranji Wilson, was excluded from the 1919 New Zealand Imperial Services rugby tour of South Africa, due to his English-West Indian ancestry.<sup>2</sup> Wilson was viewed by white South Africans as a 'Coloured', and was unable to play alongside 'whites' according to the segregationist custom of South African sport and society.

The possibility of New Zealand's rugby, military or government officials insisting on Ranji Wilson's involvement in the 1919 New Zealand Services' tour was not apparently considered. In later years, a member of the team, John 'Alex' Bruce, felt that the 1919 team had taken the 'soft option' by conforming to white South African social customs, and excluding Ranji Wilson from the tour.<sup>3</sup> He believed that a stand on the question of 'Coloured' inclusion would have averted the humiliation of 'a fine man and sportsman'.<sup>4</sup> In addition, it would

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<sup>1</sup> NZRFU Management Committee Minutes, 11 November 1911.

<sup>2</sup> G. Slatter, *On the Ball*, 1970, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> B. Luxford, *Alex the Bruce*, 1994, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

perhaps enable the inclusion of Maori on subsequent rugby tours of South Africa.<sup>5</sup> Hitherto, Wilson and Bruce were loose forwards for Wellington and New Zealand before the Great War. Both players also played for the New Zealand Services team in Britain during 1919.<sup>6</sup>

Maori rugby players were not chosen to tour South Africa in 1919, as they (like Ranji Wilson) were considered by white South Africans to be 'Coloured'. Nonetheless, the itinerary for the 1921 Springbok tour of New Zealand included games against a New Zealand Maori XV and provincial teams which included Maori players. The Springboks also attended a number of hui. As the SARB did not object to the touring programme, New Zealand rugby administrators presumed that the Springboks would abide by the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand. Hence, the equal status of Maori and Pakeha as New Zealand citizens would be respected by the South Africans.

The initial relationship between Maori and the 1921 Springboks was free of racial tension, and was sustained until the game against the New Zealand Maori XV on 7 September 1921. Within a formal and informal setting, the Springboks were received by North Island tribal confederations. At a Waitara (Taranaki) hui, press correspondents observed similarities between Maori and

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> A. C. Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby Football: Volume One 1870-1945*, 1948, pp. 526, 529-530.

Afrikaners as conquered nations within the British Empire.<sup>7</sup> A Cabinet Minister, Dr. Maui Pomare, translated the Maori welcome into English, and Theo Pienaar did the same when the South Africans responded in Afrikaans.<sup>8</sup> Similar greetings were offered by Hawke's Bay Maori to the Springboks at Hastings,<sup>9</sup> and within an informal context in the Bay of Plenty. A number of the players also planted some thirty trees at 'Springbok Point' overlooking Whakarewarewa (Rotorua), during a visit to a predominantly Maori school.<sup>10</sup>

The various hui and informal social occasions between the Springboks and Maori indicated that the South Africans apparently respected the inclusionist ideals of New Zealand. This received further emphasis during games against North Island provincial teams. Included in the 1921 tour itinerary were matches against Bay of Plenty and a combined Hawke's Bay-Poverty Bay XV. Both provincial teams included several Maori players.<sup>11</sup> Indisputably for the first time, the Springboks were opposed by players of darker skin colour. For the Hawke's Bay-Poverty Bay game, the referee was T. Parata, a

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<sup>7</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 16 September 1921.

<sup>8</sup> *Press*, 14 September 1921.

<sup>9</sup> *Weekly Press* and *NZ Referee*, 25 August 1921, 16 September 1921.

<sup>10</sup> *Press*, 26 August 1921.

<sup>11</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 6 September 1921. Nine members of the Maori XV had played against the Springboks for their provinces.

leading Maori rugby administrator. He was almost certainly the first 'non-white' rugby official to referee the Springboks. The teams, furthermore, were entertained by a Maori cultural party before the game.<sup>12</sup>

Relations between Springbok and Maori throughout the 1921 tour suggested that the match of 7 September 1921 against the New Zealand Maori XV would be no different to any other. Yet, before the game, several of the Springbok players allegedly turned their backs during a pre-game haka by a Maori cultural party.<sup>13</sup> The incident was overlooked by the sporting press, which presumed that nothing untoward had taken place. The Maori XV players did not publicly remark at the time that they were offended. Moreover, photographs of the haka which appeared in the *Otago Witness* failed to indicate that the Springbok players had turned their backs.<sup>14</sup>

It was only in the mid-to-late twentieth century, when New Zealand's rugby contacts with South Africa were opposed by many on racial grounds, that the Springbok back-turning incident was mentioned. The Maori XV winger, Jack Blake, remarked in later years that he and the rest of the team were 'seething with anger' at the actions of the Springboks.<sup>15</sup> The game itself was vigorous and, at

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<sup>12</sup> *Otago Witness*, 6 September 1921.

<sup>13</sup> R. Chester and N. McMillan, *The Visitors*, 1990, p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> *Otago Witness*, 20 September 1921.

<sup>15</sup> N. McMillan, "Duelling Giants", *New Zealand Sports Monthly*, July 1994, p. 22.

times, controversial. The Springboks claimed that the Maori XV's scrummaging style was illegal.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, several of the Maori XV and sections of the Napier crowd objected to a Springbok try scored late in the game, which allowed them to defeat the Maori XV by 9-8.<sup>17</sup> The Springbok victory was obtained arguably through a refereeing error. The Maori players, nonetheless, apparently accepted their defeat in sportsmanlike manner.

The Springbok-Maori XV match immediately became an occasion of ignominy due to the publication of the Blackett cablegram. A South African newspaper correspondent, Charles Blackett, delivered his version of the game to the Napier Postal and Telegraph Department:

This was the most unfortunate match ever played. Only result great pressure being brought to bear on [Harold] Bennett induced them to meet the Maoris, who had assisted largely in the entertainment of the Springboks. It was bad enough having to play a team officially designated 'New Zealand Natives', but the spectacle of thousands of Europeans frantically cheering on a band of coloured men to defeat members of their own race was too much for the Springboks, who were frankly disgusted.

This was not the worst. The crowd was [the] most unsportsmanlike experienced on the tour, especially [a] section who lost all control of their feelings...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Maori XV packed a seven player (2-3-2) scrum, which was a customary tactic of New Zealand rugby teams. However, the Springboks did not dispute its legitimacy before playing the Maori XV.

<sup>17</sup> Chester and McMillan, *Visitors*, pp. 113-114. The Springbok winger had allegedly stepped into touch before passing the ball to the try scorer.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 9 September 1921.

An employee of the Postal and Telegraph Department, J. T. Evans, and two of his colleagues illegally typed a copy of the cablegram and forwarded it to the Napier *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>19</sup>

The public response to the Blackett cablegram was immediately one of outrage at the explicit slur against the Maori XV. Public criticism of the cablegram, however, reflected the social darwinist concept of 'superior' and 'inferior' races. Maori and Pakeha spokespeople took issue with the cablegram's implication of racial parity between Maori and black South Africans. The equality of Maori and Pakeha was a common platitude of many New Zealanders - Pakeha in particular. On the other hand, black South Africans were viewed by New Zealand commentators - Maori and Pakeha - to be racially inferior to Maori.

As Charles Blackett was not immediately named as the cablegram's author, New Zealand indignation was directed towards the Springbok players. The Christchurch *Sun* reported rumours that a number of the Springboks "strongly resented having to play the Maoris."<sup>20</sup> 'Pale Face', in the *Daily Telegraph*, accused the Springboks of hypocrisy. They had accepted Maori hospitality, but now appeared to think Maori rugby players were racially inferior. He added, threateningly, that the South Africans may suffer 'unsportsmanlike treatment' if they

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Sun*, 13 September 1921.



persisted with such views.<sup>21</sup>

The lion's share of local opposition to the Blakett cablegram condemned sporting and social segregation when it was applied to Maori, yet failed to rebuke its application to black South Africans. The Hawke's Bay Rugby Union Executive, in a telegram to the Springbok manager, Harold Bennett, remarked that the Springbok players had spent enough time in New Zealand to be aware of its inclusionist tradition. Hence, they should not liken Maori to black South Africans.<sup>22</sup> The Christchurch *Press*, in an editorial, commented that it was absurd to place black South Africans 'on an equality' with Maori. It added, however, that white South Africans may have 'good reasons' to practise segregation against 'Kaffirs and Zulus'.<sup>23</sup>

Publicised Maori protests against the Blakett cablegram were as social darwinist in nature as those of Pakeha. Nonetheless, they were confined publicly to the Arawa tribal confederation (Bay of Plenty) and the renowned doctor, Te Rangi Hiroa (Dr Peter Buck). The Arawa and Te Rangi Hiroa protests, nonetheless, had great impact due to their status of 'respectability' within Pakeha society. The Arawa had supported British and colonial troops against 'rebel' Maori in the nineteenth

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<sup>21</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1921.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Press*, 15 September 1921.

century Anglo-Maori wars.<sup>24</sup> Their loyalist reputation was enhanced at the beginning of the Great War, when they were among the first Maori to volunteer for military service.<sup>25</sup> The Arawa reacted to the Blackett cablegram by accusing the Springboks of ungentlemanly behaviour. They also regretted offering 'courtesy and hospitality' to the Springboks during their Rotorua visit.<sup>26</sup>

The most eloquent, yet explicitly social darwinist objection to the Blackett cablegram was advanced by Te Rangi Hiroa, the Director of Maori Hygiene. Te Rangi Hiroa was part of a Maori elite that favoured assimilation into Pakeha society as essential for the material rejuvenation of Maori.<sup>27</sup> As an Otago University graduate (he was one of the first Maori medical students),<sup>28</sup> and a former Liberal Party politician, Te Rangi Hiroa was the embodiment of cultural assimilation. He described the South African use of sporting segregation against Maori as 'bad taste and gross

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<sup>24</sup> W. Gardiner, *Te Mura O Te Ahi: The Story of the Maori Battalion*, 1992, pp. 13, 23.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Sun*, 14 September 1921.

<sup>27</sup> See M. King, "Between Two Worlds", in G. Rice (Ed), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 1992, pp. 294-295. Te Rangi Hiroa's peers included Apirana Ngata and Maui Pomare. All had attended Te Aute College, were university graduates, members of the 'Young Maori Party', and had served in Parliament.

<sup>28</sup> J. B. Condliffe, *Te Rangi Hiroa: The Life of Sir Peter Buck*, 1971, p. 76.

ignorance'.<sup>29</sup> He also believed that the Springboks should have been aware of the equal status between Maori and Pakeha. Their ignorance of New Zealand social traditions, according to Te Rangi Hiroa, stemmed from 'developing brawn and muscle' for sporting success, while neglecting their intellectual faculties.<sup>30</sup>

Te Rangi Hiroa's defence of Maori against South African racism, however, was based on an assumption of Maori racial 'superiority' over black South Africans. He explained that Maori were 'Caucasian' and not 'negroid', and were not conquered like 'menial' races.<sup>31</sup> Instead, through the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori enjoyed equal citizenship.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, the alleged Springbok objection to playing the Maori XV was especially galling. Te Rangi Hiroa believed if the Springboks maintained their segregationist beliefs, they should not be invited back to New Zealand. He felt that this would protect Maori players, supporters and their 'friends' from further 'gratuitous insult'.<sup>33</sup>

The extent of local indignation against the Blackett cablegram prompted a public disavowal from the Springbok

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<sup>29</sup> *Sun*, 14 September 1921.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> See Condliffe, p. 173., for a similar racial distinction between Samoans and 'negroes'. After settling in Honolulu during 1930, Te Rangi Hiroa made it clear to a visiting United States Congressional Committee that 'Samoans...were not negroes but Aryans'.

<sup>33</sup> *Sun*, 14 September 1921.

manager, Harold Bennett. In a considered public statement, Bennett pointed out that the cablegram was not published in the South African sporting press. He mentioned that 'a newspaper correspondent' (Blackett) had written the cablegram in the heat of the moment and regretted his action almost immediately.<sup>34</sup> Bennett added that the Springboks were not involved in writing the cablegram, and denied that they were coerced into playing the Maori XV.<sup>35</sup> Yet, Charles Blackett, who admitted writing the cablegram, was 'astonished' that Bennett had apologised to the press. He was equally surprised that South African newspapers had not published the cablegram.<sup>36</sup>

The revelation from Harold Bennett that Charles Blackett was responsible for the cablegram was immediately accepted by sporting commentators.<sup>37</sup> The rapport between the Springboks and Maori before 7 September 1921 was also referred to as proof that the South Africans were happy to play the Maori XV.<sup>38</sup> The Maori XV manager, 'Ned' Parata, denied that ill-feeling existed between the Springbok and Maori players. To emphasise the apparent amicability between South African and Maori, Parata mentioned that his son was the

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<sup>34</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1921.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 16 September 1921.

<sup>37</sup> *Sun*, 16 September 1921.

<sup>38</sup> *Press*, 15 September 1921.

Springbok mascot for several of their games. Furthermore, he was asked to do the same for the final (and deciding) match between the All Blacks and Springboks.<sup>39</sup> Following Parata's remarks, discussion surrounding the Blackett cablegram faded from the sporting press.

The Springbok players were reminded of the inclusionist custom of New Zealand society by a prominent Reform Government Cabinet Minister, Gordon Coates, following the final test match. Coates, who was Minister of Native Affairs, remarked at a teams' dinner that Maori and Pakeha were 'one in this country'.<sup>40</sup> His comments, while alluding to the equal citizenship of Maori and Pakeha, could be viewed by some as a euphemism for Maori assimilation into Pakeha culture.

Throughout the furore of the Blackett cablegram, limited debate surfaced over Maori sporting rights in relation to future New Zealand and South African rugby tours. Harold Bennett, in a conversation with T. Parata, dismissed the prospect of a Maori rugby tour of South Africa. He outlined the problems that Maori players would face under the colour line such as racially segregated hotels, restaurants, public transport, and impulsive racist abuse.<sup>41</sup> He also argued that Maori should not be included in future All Black teams to South Africa.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Sun*, 16 September 1921.

<sup>40</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 20 September 1921.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1921.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

Bennett's remarks would rekindle racial controversy in subsequent years, as Maori exclusion became the conventional practice of the NZRFU when selecting All Black teams to tour South Africa.

Significant as the Blakett cablegram was (and racial issues would become), the 1921 tour took place within a wider political and social context of post-Great War imperialist sentiment. Middle class and 'better educated' New Zealanders, in particular, held an exalted opinion of the British Empire.<sup>43</sup> The 'good' citizen was seen primarily as a citizen of the Empire, and secondly one of New Zealand.<sup>44</sup> Schoolteachers viewed 'patriotism' as synonymous to imperialism.<sup>45</sup> School curriculum and textbooks focused on British history and imperial military triumphs.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, state schools, from 1921, were compelled to 'salute the flag' (often the Union Jack) every week.<sup>47</sup>

Although middle class commentators attempted to encourage imperialist hegemony within New Zealand

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<sup>43</sup> K. Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity*, 1986, p. 108.

<sup>44</sup> P. J. Gibbons, "The Climate of Opinion", in Rice (Ed), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, p. 326.

<sup>45</sup> K. Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 1991, p. 247.

<sup>46</sup> J. O. C. Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History*, 1987, p. 193. The school textbook, *The Story of the British Nation*, was reprinted frequently during the 1920s.

<sup>47</sup> Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, p. 232.

society, conflicting attitudes towards Britain were, at times, expressed by working class commentators. However, the extent of anti-imperial sentiment remains difficult to quantify. The Labour Party, nevertheless, was often accused by its opponents of 'disloyalty to the Empire' for its opposition to military conscription.<sup>48</sup> Many New Zealanders, furthermore, had to compete against British immigrants for employment following the Great War. Their scornful reference to expatriate Britons as 'Homies',<sup>49</sup> was anything but Anglocentric.

The customary view of middle class commentators towards the 1921 tour was that it symbolised healthy inter-imperial relations. Imperial co-operation between New Zealand and South Africa previously took place within a military context during the Great War. It was subsequently transferred from the battlefield to the playing field.<sup>50</sup> According to sports administrators, conservative politicians and press editors, the 1921 tour was an opportunity to cement sporting and social contacts between two nations of the Empire. Without mentioning the British Empire specifically, the *Christchurch Press*, in an editorial, described sporting occasions such as New Zealand and South African rugby as a 'potent' factor that

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<sup>48</sup> Sinclair, *History of New Zealand*, p. 243.

<sup>49</sup> Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, pp. 104-105, 108.

<sup>50</sup> B. Stoddart, "Sport, Culture, and Postcolonial Relations: A Preliminary Analysis of the Commonwealth Games", in G. Redmond (Ed.), *Sport and Politics*, 1986, p. 126.

encouraged 'friendships' and 'mutual international knowledge'.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the constant imperialist platitudes from middle class commentators, the 1921 tour was a potential stimulus for New Zealand and South African sporting nationalism. It was the first major rugby tour for both countries without British participation.<sup>52</sup> For that reason, New Zealand and South Africa, by playing against each other, displayed symbolic independence from 'home'. Yet, the wider nationalist significance of the tour was either overlooked totally by sporting commentators, or alluded to within an imperial setting.

The 1921 tour, from a South African perspective, continued the theme of 'conciliation' between Afrikaner and Anglo South Africans. This was previously manifested through rugby contacts between South Africa and Britain before the Great War. Afrikaners were commonly selected for South African teams against Britain, and the captain of the first (1906-07) Springboks to Britain was an Afrikaner, Paul Roos.<sup>53</sup> Following the Great War, the ethnic mix of Springbok touring teams indicated the extent of Afrikaner domination of South African rugby. Team selections often mirrored the two-thirds to one-

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<sup>51</sup> *Press*, 13 July 1921.

<sup>52</sup> See Swan, pp. 287-297. Previously, New Zealand had toured Australia on numerous occasions, and North America in 1913.

<sup>53</sup> I. D. Difford, *History of South African Rugby Football (1875-1932)*, 1933, passim. Anglos captained the 1891, 1896, 1903 and 1910 South African rugby teams.



third split between Afrikaners and Anglos in the white South African population.<sup>54</sup> The Afrikaner predominance in Springbok teams also extended to the Springbok captaincy throughout New Zealand and South African rugby contacts before (and after) 1950. Theo Pienaar (1921), Phil Mostert (1928), Phil Nel (1937) and Felix du Plessis (1949) were the Springbok captains against their respective New Zealand opponents.

The Afrikaner domination of Springbok rugby was maintained by the selection of the 1921 team. Little difference existed in its composition with that of the 1906-07 and 1912-13 Springbok teams to Britain. That approximately two-thirds of the 1921 Springboks were Afrikaners was the basis of journalistic exaggeration before their arrival in New Zealand. The players were erroneously described in the sporting press as 'Dutch-Boer' giants with blond hair and blue eyes. However, a team photograph indicated that only one player, J. S. Olivier, had obviously blond hair.<sup>55</sup>

The 'blond Dutch giant' image of the South Africans vanished immediately following their New Zealand arrival. Consequently, the players received frequent imperialist praise from New Zealand political and sporting elites. Most spoke fervently of the pre-eminence of South Africans and New Zealanders among the people of the

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<sup>54</sup> D. Woods, *Black and White*, 1981, pp. 44-46.

<sup>55</sup> Chester and McMillan, *Visitors*, p. 103; Difford, pp. 380-381.

Empire, and paid homage to the players as role-models of South African and Empire masculinity. At a Christchurch civic function, the rhetoric of the Mayor, Dr Henry Thacker (President of the Canterbury Rugby League), transcended sport and focused on imperial politics. He mentioned that the South African Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, and his predecessor, Louis Botha, were admired greatly by New Zealanders.<sup>56</sup> Previously, Smuts and Botha were leading proponents of Anglo-Afrikaner conciliation following the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War.<sup>57</sup> Smuts consequently became a leading figure in imperial politics, based on his service in the Imperial War Cabinet during the Great War.

The role of South Africa in imperial politics was emphasised further by Frederick Wilding, a renowned Canterbury sports administrator.<sup>58</sup> He was also father of Anthony Wilding, winner of four singles titles at the Wimbledon tennis tournament before 1914. Speaking after Thacker, Wilding proclaimed that South Africa, despite earlier differences with the British Empire, "had taken John Bull by the hand, and gone into partnership with his

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<sup>56</sup> *Press*, 26 July 1921.

<sup>57</sup> L. Thompson, "The Compromise of Union", in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (Eds), *The Oxford History of South Africa: Volume Two 1870-1966*, 1971, pp. 339, 342-343, 347-349.

<sup>58</sup> *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Volume Two. 1870-1900*, 1993, pp. 576-577. Before emigrating to New Zealand, Frederick Wilding was a renowned rugby player in the West of England. Subsequently, he served as president of the New Zealand Cricket Council, and president of the Canterbury Cricket Association.

offspring."<sup>59</sup> His verbosity alluded to imperial sporting and military links, and almost certainly reflected the quintessential middle class perspective of imperialism.

The sanctimonious imperialist platitudes employed by middle class commentators, such as Wilding, to portray the Springboks and South Africa was echoed by New Zealand's political elite. The Acting Prime Minister Sir Francis Dillon Bell,<sup>60</sup> remarked at a Government function that the 1921 tour attracted the interest of the Government and 'people of the Dominion', as the players were 'missionaries'.<sup>61</sup> Despite the ambiguous characterisation employed by Bell, the Springboks were perceived as 'missionaries of Empire' in much the same way as the 1905 All Blacks to Britain had been. They were also missionaries of rugby, although the spectator numbers at the provincial games indicate that they were preaching to the converted. The Springbok-Wellington game attracted 30,000 spectators, while the first three games of the tour drew 33,000 people.<sup>62</sup>

The imperialist portrayal of the Springboks by middle class commentators, on occasions, was similar to that of British royalty and returning soldiers. The analogy with

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<sup>59</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 26 July 1921.

<sup>60</sup> *DNZB. Volume Two*, pp. 35-36. During 1921, Sir Francis Dillon Bell was president of the Wellington Cricket Association.

<sup>61</sup> *Press*, 23 July 1921.

<sup>62</sup> Chester and McMillan, *Visitors*, pp. 103-105.

royalty was referred to by Harold Bennett at a Nelson function.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the South Africans (following the Wanganui game), were greeted at railway stations between Wanganui and New Plymouth in similar fashion to royalty and soldiers. Consequently, Bennett remarked at a New Plymouth function, attended by civic leaders and NZRFU administrators, that his players were 'overwhelmed' by New Zealand hospitality.<sup>64</sup> However, the public response to the Springboks' presence was due undoubtedly to sporting factors. The sporting public was starved of international rugby, as the 1921 tour was the first major sporting event in New Zealand since the 1908 Anglo-Welsh tour.

The 1921 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand took place within a social context of middle class imperial celebration, stemming from the aftermath of the Great War. Middle class commentators such as educators, sports officials and press editors repeatedly proclaimed the imperialist relevance of sporting events. Thus, the 1921 tour, from a middle class outlook, represented an emphatic endorsement of imperial sporting relations. The Springboks were portrayed as 'a fine sporting lot' who played 'manly' rugby and behaved as 'gentlemen'.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, as elite sportsmen from an associate Dominion

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<sup>63</sup> *Press*, 12 September 1921.

<sup>64</sup> *Press*, 15 July 1921.

<sup>65</sup> *Press*, 19 September 1921.

within the British Empire, they were compared favourably with royalty and war heroes. The tour also promoted New Zealand and South African sporting nationalism. The sporting press, however, overlooked the nationalist significance of the first major rugby tour for New Zealand and South Africa without British involvement.

The 1921 tour generated constant imperialist laurels, yet the publication of the Blakett cablegram undoubtedly tarnished their public image. Through the cablegram and its attack against the New Zealand Maori XV, New Zealanders became increasingly aware of South African sporting and social segregation. Local denunciation of the cablegram, while condemning explicit racism against Maori, did nothing to question its practice against black South Africans. The belief that Maori were racially 'equal' to Pakeha and 'superior' to black South Africans, was shared by many Pakeha and Maori spokespeople such as Te Rangi Hiroa.

The inclusionist ethos of New Zealand rugby was yet to be officially tested under South African social conditions. During the 1921 tour, Harold Bennett's recommendation that Maori rugby players should be excluded from South Africa received limited newspaper debate. Hence, uncertainty remained whether All Black teams to South Africa would include Maori and other New Zealanders of darker skin colour. If Maori were permitted to tour, what would their social status be within South Africa? If they were excluded, would the NZRFU maintain

sporting relations contacts with South Africa? Needless to say, such questions would require answers before the resumption of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The 1928 All Black Tour of South Africa:

*'This decision is a slur on the dignity and manhood of Maori.'* (Akarana Maori Association)

The exclusion of Maori rugby players was the most dominant aspect of the 1928 All Black rugby tour of South Africa. Maori exclusion observed the precedent set by the 1919 New Zealand Imperial Services rugby team of excluding players of darker skin colour from South Africa. The prospect of Maori inclusion in the 1928 All Blacks, however, was always remote. The controversy of the 1921 Blakett cablegram, if it did little else, affirmed the opinion that South African rugby would not welcome Maori players. During the 1921 Springbok tour, Harold Bennett, the Springbok manager, remarked publicly that he would recommend Maori exclusion from teams visiting South Africa. Despite the negation of Maori sporting rights, middle class New Zealand commentators continued to view rugby contacts with South Africa from an imperialist viewpoint. Their rhetoric, however, was less pious than that of 1921. In contrast, the sporting Empire provoked a mixed reaction from South African commentators during the 1928 tour. Anglo South Africans, at times, saw the tour as part of the imperial sporting

network. Many Afrikaners, however, rejected the imperialist depiction of South African rugby. As Afrikaner players dominated Springbok teams, Afrikaner commentators viewed rugby increasingly within an 'Afrikaner nationalist' context.

Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour directly contradicted the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand sport and society, based on the equal citizenship of Maori and Pakeha. Within wider society, however, the status of Maori in relation to Pakeha remained unequal. Throughout the 1920s, the Reform Government attempted to narrow the social and economic gap between Maori and Pakeha.<sup>1</sup> Its efforts were hindered by the continued appropriation of Maori land.<sup>2</sup> By 1929, the loss of Maori land had reached an average annual rate of 29,091 hectares.<sup>3</sup> Only 1.6 million hectares of land (out of 26

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<sup>1</sup> M. King, "Between Two Worlds", pp. 288-289, 297; R. Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, 1990, p. 186. Reform encouraged Maori advancement through assimilationist means. Its education policy sought to establish Maori as 'good farmers' and 'good farmer's wives'.

<sup>2</sup> J. Kelsey, "Legal Imperialism and the Colonisation of Aotearoa", in P. Spoonley, C. Macpherson, D. Pearson, and C. Sedgwick (Eds), *Tauiti: Racism and Ethnicity in New Zealand*, 1984, p. 35; H. Yensen, "It went so well, so what went wrong?", in H. Yensen, K. Hague, and T. McCreanor (Eds), *Honouring The Treaty*, 1989, p. 65. The Government, through the 1928 Public Works Act, was able to confiscate Maori land for forestry, recreation, roading, subdivision and 'better utilization'.

<sup>3</sup> M. King, *Maori: A Photographic and Social History*, 1983, p. 200; Walker, p. 187.



million) was Maori-owned.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the only realm of tangible equality between Maori and Pakeha remained the sporting field. Maori players were frequently chosen for New Zealand teams, although they failed to win selection for the All Blacks against the 1921 Springboks.<sup>5</sup>

The dominance of Maori players in New Zealand rugby was never more apparent than during the unbeaten 1924-25 All Black tour of the British Isles.<sup>6</sup> The 'Invincibles' tour produced the first genuine hero of New Zealand rugby, George Nepia, who played every game and developed a legendary playing reputation. Nepia's sporting mastery and youth (he was twenty years of age in 1924) assured him of a lengthy rugby career. Yet, his emergence raised the question of Maori sporting rights in South Africa. In subsequent years, Nepia claimed that he was enthusiastic at the prospect of touring South Africa as an All Black. His hopes were dashed before the Invincibles' return to New Zealand by rugby officials, who informed him that Maori players would be ineligible.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Nepia remarked in 1963 (three years after Maori exclusion from the 1960 All Black tour of South Africa) that both he and

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<sup>4</sup> Kelsey, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> For 1921 All Black test teams, see Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby Football: Volume One*, pp. 357-358, 360.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 302. The 1924-25 'Invincibles' included three Maori backline players from the Hawke's Bay Ranfurly Shield team - George Nepia, Jimmy Mill and Lui Paewai.

<sup>7</sup> T. Newnham, *Apartheid is not a Game*, 1975, p. 22.

Jimmy Mill were 'strong candidates' for the 1928 tour of South Africa. At the last moment, he claimed, the NZRFU decided to rule Maori ineligible for selection.<sup>8</sup> Nepia's version of events is impossible to verify one way or the other,<sup>9</sup> but whatever the truth of the matter there were no Maori chosen for the proposed 1928 tour of South Africa.

The eligibility of Maori players was overlooked at the 1925 NZRFU AGM, when the Rugby Union's Management Committee<sup>10</sup> (Executive) scheduled the All Blacks to tour South Africa in 1928. At the same meeting, a tour of Britain and France was proposed for the New Zealand Maori rugby team in 1926.<sup>11</sup> Although the Rugby Union did not admit it at the time, the 1926 Maori tour (and subsequent Maori rugby tours) had the effect of recompensing Maori players for missing out on All Black teams to South Africa. It may also be no mere coincidence that the NZRFU introduced the Prince of Wales Cup competition between regional Maori teams. Brought to New Zealand from the

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<sup>8</sup> G. Nepia and T. McLean, *I, George Nepia*, 1963, p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> See M. Romanos, "Nepia was the supreme NZ whizz-kid", *Tu Tangata*, Issue 27, December 1985, pp. 34-36. It should be mentioned that George Nepia was known for his use of 'poetic licence' when recalling his playing career. He claimed, for instance, that he was sixteen years of age upon selection for the 1924-25 All Blacks.

<sup>10</sup> See T. McLean, *New Zealand Rugby Legends*, 1987, p. 113. Between 1894 and 1937, the NZRFU was administered by its Management Committee. The Committee consisted of seven delegates and, from 1922, a non-voting Maori Advisory Board member.

<sup>11</sup> *Press*, 1 May 1925.

1926 Imperial Conference by the Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, the trophy was first awarded to Tai Rawhiti (Eastern) and was contested from 1928,<sup>12</sup> during the All Black tour of South Africa.

Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour generated little, if any debate from the sporting press. On the other hand, sporting commentators simply emphasised the playing prospects of the All Blacks. As early as July 1926, the *Napier Daily Telegraph* predicted a 'Fullback problem' for the 1928 All Blacks through the absence of George Nepia.<sup>13</sup> Coinciding with the 1927 All Black trials, the sporting press believed that the fullback and halfback positions (the respective playing positions of Nepia and Jimmy Mill) were a selectorial nightmare.<sup>14</sup> The players on show at the trials were apparently not up to the calibre of Nepia and Mill. A columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, 'Scrum', commented on 'new men' required to replace Nepia and Mill. He added that the two players were 'retired'.<sup>15</sup> Nepia and Mill, however, were still playing at provincial level. They subsequently played for the All Blacks against the 1930 British Isles team.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Press*, 28 September 1927. Tai Tokerau (Northern), Tai Hauauru (Western), Tai Rawhiti (Eastern) and Te Waipounamu (Southern - including the South Island) contested the Prince of Wales Cup.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 1926.

<sup>14</sup> *New Zealand Truth*, 29 September 1927.

<sup>15</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 1 October 1927.

<sup>16</sup> Swan, pp. 378-381.

Rugby administrators and the New Zealand sporting public were not initially drawn into the debate over Maori eligibility for the 1928 tour. The Auckland-based Akarana Maori Association, however, forwarded the following resolution to the NZRFU:

[Te Akarana] regrets that in order to defer to the South African opinion, the New Zealand Rugby Union has decided to ignore Maori manhood in the selection of a New Zealand representative team and feels that this decision is a slur on the dignity and manhood of the Maori.<sup>17</sup>

The Akarana Maori Association, furthermore, contended that the NZRFU should not send the All Blacks to South Africa, as the team failed to represent New Zealand as a 'united Maori-European people'.<sup>18</sup> Its resolution was almost certainly the first instance of a Maori organisation questioning the morality of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa. The Akarana Maori Association, nevertheless, was active during the late 1920s in addressing wider Maori concerns within New Zealand society. Among its objectives, for instance, was the establishment of a lectureship in Maori language at Auckland University College.<sup>19</sup>

The Akarana resolution, notwithstanding its appeal to the NZRFU to send a team truly representative of New

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<sup>17</sup> *Sun*, 8 October 1927.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> F. Hercock, *A Democratic Minority: A Centennial History of the Auckland University Students' Association*, 1994, p. 33; K. Sinclair, *A History of the University of Auckland 1883-1983*, 1983, p. 202.

Zealand to South Africa, received little support from Maori spokespeople. At the time, the general consensus within New Zealand was that racial segregation, while unfortunate, was part of South African social custom. Thus, the All Blacks were obliged to respect that custom, in the manner that the 1919 New Zealand Services team and the 1921 Springboks conformed to the respective social traditions of South Africa and New Zealand.

The only public figure of note to support the Akarana resolution was the Mayor of Christchurch, Rev John K. Archer. He was the first Labour Party candidate and Minister of Religion to win a mayoralty in New Zealand.<sup>20</sup> At a Lyttelton public meeting, Archer remarked to an audience of 'thousands' that had he been a selected member of the 1928 All Blacks, he would have refused to tour a country that would not admit Maori.<sup>21</sup> Archer was conceivably the first Pakeha politician to publicly oppose the selection of an all-white New Zealand rugby team to South Africa. His outspoken support of Maori sporting rights, however, failed to attract similar views from other leftist commentators.

The belief that Maori rugby players would be

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<sup>20</sup> *Press*, 30 April 1925; W. H. Scotter, *A History of Canterbury*, 1965, p. 357; J. Sharfe, *The Canterbury Workers' Educational Association: The Origins and Development - 1915 to 1947. A Working Class Organisation?* 1990, p. 169. Before his election as Christchurch Mayor in April 1925, John Archer had served as vice-president of the New Zealand Labour Party. He was also a Parliamentary candidate on several occasions.

<sup>21</sup> *Sun*, 8 October 1927.

humiliated by sporting and social segregation was, according to the NZRFU, the basis for their exclusion from the 1928 tour. In its response to the Akarana resolution, the Rugby Union implied that Maori had to be shielded from racist insult.<sup>22</sup> It added that the Maori Advisory Board, established in 1922, supported Maori exclusion.<sup>23</sup> The Maori Advisory Board, however, consisted of delegates who were elected by the provincial Rugby Unions and not Maori players themselves.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the extent to which it represented the interests of Maori rugby remains ambiguous.

The NZRFU, moreover, discounted the suggestion by the Akarana Maori Association to cancel the 1928 tour. It claimed that the All Blacks were obliged to tour South Africa for financial reasons. As the 1921 Springbok tour was profitable for New Zealand rugby, the SARB was eager to generate similar receipts from the 1928 tour. It mentioned that it was 'discourteous' to decline the SARB's invitation, and also remarked that it was 'absurd' to punish the SARB for racial segregation.<sup>25</sup> Its attempt

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<sup>22</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 11 October 1927.

<sup>23</sup> *Press*, 12 October 1927. It remains possible that the Maori Advisory Board was formed as a response to the racial controversy of the 1921 Blakett cablegram. This, however, cannot be confirmed due to the lack of available sources.

<sup>24</sup> Newnham, pp. 23-24; R. Thompson, *Retreat From Apartheid*, p. 21. Ned Parata was the first Maori Advisory Board chairman between 1922 and 1926. He was also an honorary representative on the NZRFU Management Committee, yet had no voting power.

<sup>25</sup> *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 11 October 1927.

to separate sports and politics, however, overlooked the fact that the SARB represented only white South African rugby.

In reaching the decision to exclude Maori from the 1928 All Blacks, the NZRFU was almost certainly influenced by the opinions of its chairman, Stan Dean. In the years before the Great War, Dean had experienced the social customs of South Africa personally. He was employed by the South British Insurance Company in Johannesburg, and played rugby for the Mines club.<sup>26</sup> Dean would have indisputably informed the NZRFU and Maori Advisory Board of white South African racial attitudes. Yet, his role surrounding Maori exclusion was overlooked by the sporting press. Subsequently, newspaper discussion of Maori sporting rights withered following the NZRFU's response to the Akarana Maori Association.

The exclusion of Maori rugby players from the 1928 tour failed to produce debate in New Zealand on the wider question of racial discrimination against black South Africans. The All Black players generally remained silent over inequalities between black and white South Africans. Their main focus was to play rugby, and they stood aloof from social and political questions. On several occasions, one of the All Blacks, Jim Burrows, recorded his observations of South African race relations for publication in the *Lyttelton Times*. His columns, nonetheless, were careful to avoid overt approval or

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<sup>26</sup> McLean, *Rugby Legends*, pp. 117, 120.

criticism of race relations in South Africa.<sup>27</sup>

The All Blacks, while usually detached from South African racial issues, were forced to encounter black South African anger during the first week of their tour. Coinciding with the All Blacks' arrival in Cape Town was the 30 May 1928 'flag riots'. As Afrikaners celebrated the hoisting of the (Afrikaner) Union flag over Parliament,<sup>28</sup> black protestors tore down Union flags flying from buildings and cars. The Union flag was interpreted by protestors as a symbol of Afrikaner domination and black oppression. However, they cheered buildings and cars that flew the Union Jack. While several of the All Blacks witnessed the flag riots, they neither supported nor condemned black outrage. Instead, Jim Burrows observed that the protestors appeared to be 'absolutely pro-British', with 'a special grudge against the Dutch'.<sup>29</sup>

As the flag riots intensified, a number of the All Blacks narrowly avoided direct involvement and injury. One of the players, Neil McGregor, was struck by a brick as he and other players were driven through Cape Town,

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<sup>27</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 July 1928.

<sup>28</sup> See O. Pirow, *James Barry Munnick Hertzog*, No publishing date, p. 123; E. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, 1957, p. 613. The Union flag was the ancient flag of the House of Orange with three small flags - the Union Jack and the two flags of the former Boer Republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State).

<sup>29</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 July 1928.



but was not hurt.<sup>30</sup> Newspaper reports of the riots, however, failed to mention whether the cars that the All Blacks travelled in flew the Union Jack or Afrikaner Union flag. Some of the players also witnessed rioters attack a woman who was holding a Union flag, before snatching it from her. The same group proceeded to smash a glass bottle over the head of a man who attempted to help the woman. The players considered offering assistance to both victims, but were unable to get close enough to them.<sup>31</sup> Had they become involved, they may have also suffered injury.

The Cape Town flag riots proved to be the only occasion for the All Blacks to witness black South African discontent against racial segregation. The players subsequently visited a black school in Burghersdorp (Transvaal). Jim Burrows, once again, described the occasion to the *Lyttelton Times*. Whereas Afrikaners formed the bulk of Burghersdorp's white population, Burrows noted that school lessons were taught in English.<sup>32</sup> However, it is unlikely that his remark of a 'special grudge' held by black South Africans against 'the Dutch' (during the flag riots) also applied to the

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* McGregor kept the brick as a memento of Cape Town. For a recent example of All Black embroilment in South African civil disturbances, see T. Newnham, *A Cry of Treason*, 1978, pp. 112-115.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

Afrikaans language.<sup>33</sup> Until the introduction of apartheid, English was the customary language of instruction in black primary and secondary education.

The All Blacks, in a subsequent visit to Cape Town, continued to observe the local black community, albeit within a sporting context. In the only reference to black rugby, the players noted that 'the Malays' ('Coloureds') were as enthusiastic as the Afrikaners about rugby.<sup>34</sup> They overlooked the broader issue of sporting segregation, nor did they comment on the extent of rugby's popularity among black South Africans. Nevertheless, black rugby was played in the Cape Province, Border, and Transvaal. In some instances it was organised on a colour blind or 'non-racial' basis between Africans and 'Coloureds'.<sup>35</sup>

As the 1928 All Black tour failed to produce widespread debate on racial issues, rugby affairs provided the only incident of note. New Zealand rugby followers did not receive news of a scandal that ranked alongside the 1921 Blakett cablegram. Instead, rumours of a falling out between the All Black captain, Maurice Brownlie, and his vice-captain, Mark Nicholls (supposedly

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<sup>33</sup> The June 1976 Soweto uprising was sparked by the refusal of primary and secondary school students to learn in Afrikaans (English was the preferred language of instruction). Coinciding with the Soweto riots was the 1976 All Black tour of South Africa.

<sup>34</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 July 1928.

<sup>35</sup> Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, pp. 59, 117.

over playing tactics) appeared in the New Zealand sporting press. Both players dismissed the rumours, when the All Blacks returned to New Zealand in October 1928.<sup>36</sup>

The 1928 All Black tour was customarily placed by middle class New Zealand commentators within an imperialist (rather than racial) context. Throughout the 1920s, New Zealand political and social elites remained imperial-minded, despite the changing political constitution of the British Empire. At the 1926 Imperial Conference, political sovereignty and equality between Britain and the white Dominions was the basis of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>37</sup> New Zealand political leaders, unlike their South African and Canadian peers, 'deplored' the Balfour Declaration and believed that New Zealand 'already had enough independence'.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the uncertain future of imperial political links, the view of New Zealand political elites in relation to New Zealand and South African rugby tours remained imperialist. At an official farewell banquet, the Prime Minister, Gordon Coates, spoke of the 1928 All

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<sup>36</sup> Details of the alleged Brownlie-Nicholls feud appear in the *Lyttelton Times*, 3 July 1928, 23 August 1928, 10 October 1928; *Press*, 6 October 1928; W. McCarthy, *Haka! The All Black Story*, 1968, pp. 120-121; McLean, *New Zealand Rugby Legends*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>37</sup> N. Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience*, 1969, pp. 230-236; W. D. McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, 1974, pp. 140-141; Pirow, pp. 114-118; Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, pp. 101-103.

<sup>38</sup> Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart*, pp. 102-103.

Blacks as New Zealand representatives among 'strange people in a strange land'. He added that 'nothing could bring New Zealand and South Africa together more quickly than sport'.<sup>39</sup> Coates persisted with the concept of rugby as a means of imperial diplomacy, when he and 4,000 people farewelled the All Blacks at the Wellington waterfront.<sup>40</sup> Not to be outdone, the Labour Party offered its support to the All Blacks at its annual conference. Labour, unlike Reform, distanced itself from the imperialism with which sporting events were frequently invested. Employing internationalist rhetoric, Labour acknowledged the role of previous New Zealand rugby teams in contributing to 'international goodwill and understanding'.<sup>41</sup>

In comparison to conservative politicians such as Gordon Coates, New Zealand sporting officialdom was less openly imperialist when discussing the 1928 tour. They generally portrayed the All Blacks as upstanding representatives of 'Dominion' honour. The New Zealand Olympic Council, in conjunction with other sporting organisations, described the tour as a 'great mission' to uphold New Zealand's sporting reputation.<sup>42</sup> The idea of the All Blacks as flag bearers of Dominion pride was mentioned by Canterbury rugby administrators when referring to local All Blacks. The players were also seen

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<sup>39</sup> *Press*, 13 April 1928, 14 April 1928.

<sup>40</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 14 April 1928.

<sup>41</sup> *Press*, 13 April 1928.

<sup>42</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 14 April 1928.

as ambassadors to develop wider relations with South Africa.<sup>43</sup>

The notion of an imperial sporting network received substantially less comment from South African political and sporting elites throughout the 1928 tour. Instead, the standard rhetoric of South African commentators alluded to the tour as an internationalist event. Imperial-centred clichés, when expressed, usually originated from centres of strong Anglo influence such as the larger cities, Natal, and Southern Rhodesia. On the other hand, the majority of Afrikaners supported the anti-imperialist National Party - the primary vehicle of 'Afrikaner nationalism'. National's policies included South African sovereign independence, Dominion equality with Britain, and white unity through linguistic equality between Afrikaners and Anglos.<sup>44</sup> In comparison, the South African Party (SAP), which had governed since 1910, supported Anglo-Afrikaner conciliation and South African loyalty to the British Empire.

The withering of imperialist sentiment within South Africa during the 1920s was manifested by the political defeat of Jan Smuts and the SAP by the National Party at the 1924 election. Subsequently, James Hertzog became Prime Minister of an Afrikaner nationalist-dominated

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<sup>43</sup> *Press*, 2 April 1928, 5 April 1928.

<sup>44</sup> R. de Villiers, "Afrikaner Nationalism", in Wilson and Thompson (Eds), *Oxford History of South Africa: Vol. Two*, pp. 367, 369-370.

Coalition Government.<sup>45</sup> Yet, Hertzog, in comparison to his more intransigent colleagues, defined Afrikaner nationalism as Anglo-Afrikaner unity, rather than Afrikaner domination.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, he did not support South African secession from the Empire publicly. In his first speech as Prime Minister, Hertzog referred to Britain as South Africa's 'first and best friend'.<sup>47</sup> His goal of South African autonomy, moreover, was largely fulfilled by the Balfour Declaration's recognition of equal status between Britain and the Dominions.<sup>48</sup>

The anti-imperialist influence on South African politics also imbued South African sporting opinion during the 1928 tour. The All Blacks, while received enthusiastically by Anglo South African commentators, were rarely depicted as patrons of the Empire. In Natal, arguably the most imperial-minded of South African provinces, the players were apparently 'overwhelmed' by their reception from locals.<sup>49</sup> They were greeted by civic leaders, SARB officials, and an exclusively white

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<sup>45</sup> D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 1983, p. 31. The Coalition Government elected in 1924 consisted of the Afrikaner-dominated National Party and the Labour Party. It attracted the support of urban white workers from a predominately Afrikaner background.

<sup>46</sup> de Villiers, p. 380; Pirow, p. 100.

<sup>47</sup> Pirow, p. 104.

<sup>48</sup> Mansergh, pp. 230-236; McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, pp. 140-141; Pirow, pp. 114-118.

<sup>49</sup> *Press*, 24 May 1928.

gathering.<sup>50</sup> Civic welcoming speeches failed to mention the sporting Empire. Nonetheless, street-theatre antics were provided by a 'burlesque Springbok football team' performing 'Zulu war cries'. The cultural buffoonery was maintained by haka-performing New Zealand supporters, bearing a large replica silver fern.<sup>51</sup>

Anglo celebration of the All Blacks re-appeared within an urban setting throughout the 1928 tour, albeit without overt references to the Empire. At times, the team's reception paralleled that given to the 1921 Springboks by New Zealand rugby followers. As they journeyed, crowds accumulated to catch a glimpse of the team, while larger towns and cities staged official greetings.<sup>52</sup> Symbolic inter-imperial relations was alluded to at Cape Town, when the All Black captain, Maurice Brownlie was photographed with Jan Smuts,<sup>53</sup> indisputably the most imperial-minded of South African politicians. The presence of Smuts was overlooked by the South African and New Zealand sporting press. Nevertheless, newspapers and National Government Cabinet Ministers compared the All Blacks' welcome as on a par to that given to the Prince of Wales on his previous South

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<sup>50</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 July 1928.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* The South African press commented that 'thousands' turned up at Johannesburg to welcome the All Blacks.

<sup>53</sup> Greyvenstein, *Springbok Saga*, p. 80.

African visit.<sup>54</sup>

The relationship between the All Blacks and Afrikaners was generally distant, without any reference to the sporting Empire. The All Blacks felt that many Afrikaners, especially in the Orange Free State and Transvaal, invested the 1928 tour games with wider nationalist overtones. In later years, Jim Burrows recalled that games against Afrikaner-dominated teams became 'more than rugby', and a symbolic continuation of the Anglo-Boer War.<sup>55</sup> The only difference was that the All Blacks was the 'enemy', instead of the British Army. Moreover, the 1928 Springbok test teams were increasingly 'Afrikanerised'. At least 80%, or 22 of the 27 Springboks who played against the All Blacks were Afrikaners, including the captain, Phil Mostert. Approximately 37% (10) of the Springboks had also attended Stellenbosch University (the intellectual home of Afrikaner nationalism), or played for the Stellenbosch club team.<sup>56</sup>

The increased Afrikaner representation in South African provincial and national rugby teams coincided with the political tenure of the Hertzog National

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<sup>54</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 July 1928; *Press*, 30 May 1928.

<sup>55</sup> J. Burrows, *Pathway Among Men*, 1974, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup> F. Labuschagne, *Goodbye Newlands, Farewell Eden Park*, 1974, p. 215. For a record of the provinces and clubs that individual Springboks played for, see T. Goodwin, *The Complete Who's Who of International Rugby*, 1987, *passim*.



Government. The introduction of linguistic equality<sup>57</sup> by National enabled greater employment opportunities for Afrikaners in government departments at Pretoria. Many Afrikaner employees were Stellenbosch University graduates, and subsequently performed the role of 'rugby missionaries' in the Northern Transvaal.<sup>58</sup> As Stellenbosch was the hub of the Afrikaner nationalist intelligentsia, its graduates were unlikely to support the concept of an imperial sporting network.

Despite the customary distance that existed between the All Blacks and many Afrikaners, there were sporadic cases of affability between the two. In a light-hearted exchange, the Afrikaner Mayor of a high veldt town wished the All Blacks good luck, and defeat in the test matches.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, at a Pretoria dinner, the All Black manager, William Hornig, quipped that during his previous visit to South Africa, "we were fighting your blokes in the Boer War."<sup>60</sup> Informal banter aside, Hornig's comment may have been interpreted by some as offensive.

South African rugby administrators, unlike their New Zealand counterparts during the 1921 Springbok tour,

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<sup>57</sup> L. Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 1990, p. 160.

<sup>58</sup> A. Grundlingh, "Playing for Power? Rugby, Afrikaner Nationalism and Masculinity in South Africa, c. 1900-70", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. II, No. 3, Dec. 1994, pp. 410-411.

<sup>59</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 July 1928.

<sup>60</sup> McLean, *New Zealand Rugby Legends*, p. 161.

rarely discussed the social context of the 1928 tour. Instead, they elected to view it as principally a sporting occasion. The only comment relating to the wider social benefit of New Zealand and South African rugby contacts was from the SARB president, Andries 'Sport' Pienaar.<sup>61</sup> His remark was vaguely internationalist, and overlooked the theme of imperial sporting relations. Speaking at the conclusion of the tour, Pienaar stated that the All Black visit had generated 'mutual interest' in New Zealand and South Africa, and 'friendships' between their respective players.<sup>62</sup>

New Zealand political leaders described the All Blacks' return to New Zealand with less imperialist bombast, unlike the pre and post-tour rhetoric of previous rugby occasions. Gordon Coates, in a cablegram to his South African counterpart, James Hertzog, mentioned that New Zealand and South African rugby contacts encouraged 'mutual contact and association', within a wider imperial context.<sup>63</sup> The absence of imperialist slogans was more apparent during a Wellington civic function honouring the All Blacks. A Reform Cabinet Minister, K. S. Williams, remarked that the team had contributed to 'friendly relations' between New Zealand

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<sup>61</sup> See *Dictionary of South African Biography: Volume IV*, 1981, p. 457.

<sup>62</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 8 September 1928.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

and South Africa.<sup>64</sup> Williams, unlike Coates, did not allude to the Empire, but mentioned simply that the All Blacks had behaved as 'gentlemen' during their tour.<sup>65</sup>

The post-1928 tour rhetoric of the New Zealand sporting press was often more imperialist than that of conservative politicians. The Christchurch Press commented that the All Blacks had made a most favourable impression in South Africa.<sup>66</sup> The players, according to the Press, also enhanced imperial ties between the two countries.<sup>67</sup> The imperialist theme was echoed by William Hornig. He remarked that the All Blacks had created 'a small link in the chain of Empire'.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the NZRFU, in a post-tour cablegram to the SARB, failed to mention the sporting Empire. Instead, it hoped that the New Zealand and South African 'friendship' was 'further cemented' by the All Blacks.<sup>69</sup>

New Zealand and South African rugby contacts, through the 1928 All Black tour of South Africa, continued to raise imperialist and racial questions. Imperialist slogans among middle class New Zealand commentators was generally less bombastic than that of

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<sup>64</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 10 October 1928.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Press*, 4 October 1928.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 8 September 1928.

<sup>69</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 5 September 1928.

the 1921 Springbok tour. Within South Africa, the 1928 tour generated divergent reactions along linguistic divisions. Anglo South Africans greeted the All Blacks with enthusiasm, without resorting to overt imperialism. Afrikaners, in contrast, rejected the imperial context of New Zealand and South African rugby tours. As Springbok rugby teams became dominated numerically by Afrikaners, South African rugby was often invested with Afrikaner nationalist connotations.

The central racial issue of the 1928 All Black tour was the exclusion of Maori rugby players from South Africa. The NZRFU felt that it had to respect the segregationist ethos of South African society, and sought to 'protect' Maori from white South African racism. Hence, the most renowned All Black of the early twentieth century, George Nepia, was ruled ineligible to tour. At best, Maori exclusion aroused limited debate from political and sporting commentators. The only vociferous critics of the NZRFU's decision were the Akarana Maori Association, and John K. Archer, Labour Mayor of Christchurch. They believed that Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour was hypocritical, in that New Zealanders often boasted of the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand sport and society. Notwithstanding Archer and the Akarana Maori Association, few New Zealanders examined the paradox of sporting and social inclusion, while Maori were denied sporting and social rights in South Africa.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The 1937 Springbok Tour of New Zealand:

*'The Arawa requests that no Maori be called on to play the Springboks.'* (Arawa Confederation)

The 1937 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand coincided with increasing New Zealand awareness of racial issues on the one hand, and declining imperialist identification on the other. Unlike the 1921 Springbok and 1928 All Black tours, Maori criticism of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa emerged on a nationwide basis. Many Maori iwi and individuals feared that racial controversy of the kind similar to the Blackett cablegram would re-surface during the 1937 tour. Hence, they threatened to boycott sporting and social occasions involving the Springboks. Subsequently, the SARB assured the NZRFU that Maori would be treated by the Springboks as equals, although a match with the New Zealand Maori XV was not scheduled. As the racial question dominated the sporting press, the theme of the sporting Empire was less conspicuous during the 1937 tour. South Africa and (to a lesser extent) New Zealand began to assert greater political autonomy, following the 1931 Statute of Westminster. Within a sporting context, the British Empire Games had replaced team sports as the

leading imperial sporting event. Consequently, the imperialist clichés of previous tours were replaced with rugby-centred slogans which simply acclaimed New Zealand and South African sporting relations.

The scheduling of a Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand in 1937 produced, for the first time, a widespread reaction from Maori iwi and individuals. They feared that sporting and social contact between Maori and Springbok would inflame similar controversy to that of the Blakett cablegram, following the 1921 Springbok-Maori XV match. The increase of Maori protest against possible Springbok insult took place within a context of social reform initiated by the First Labour Government. Among Labour's objectives was greater social and economic parity between Maori and Pakeha. It introduced equality of state pensions between Maori and Pakeha, and increased expenditure on Maori Land development schemes, health and education.<sup>1</sup> Yet, despite Labour's reformist agenda, inequality of social and economic opportunity between Maori and Pakeha remained.

Rugby football, unlike wider New Zealand society, was an arena where Maori often out-performed Pakeha. However, a growing number of Maori were critical of the

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<sup>1</sup> Sinclair, *History of New Zealand*, pp. 274-275; King, "Between Two Worlds", pp. 289, 300. Labour increased Maori pensions and unemployment benefits to match those of Pakeha, extended Maori Land development schemes, and increased Maori education and health expenditure.

NZRFU double-standard towards Maori sporting rights vis-a-vis New Zealand and South African rugby exchanges. In addition to seeking inclusion in future All Black tours of South Africa, Maori also demanded recognition as 'equals' from touring Springbok players. The Arawa Maori, however, were pessimistic that the 1937 Springboks would view Maori as equals. In a 1936 memorial to the NZRFU, they requested that Maori should boycott matches and official functions during the 1937 tour. The Arawa also proposed that the New Zealand Maori XV should not play against the Springboks.<sup>2</sup>

The basis for the Arawa memorial's sporting and social boycott of the 1937 tour was an avoidance of the 'unpleasant incidents' which took place during the 1921 Springbok tour. It remarked that Maori did not wish to distress 'distinguished visitors from an important section of the British Commonwealth' with their presence at matches and functions.<sup>3</sup> It referred to the ill-tempered 1921 Springbok-Maori XV fixture, and claimed that the Maori players were racially abused by the Springboks. It also mentioned an incident in which a number of Maori women suffered 'objectionable treatment' from the Springboks during a hui at Ohinemutu. The memorial, however, failed to recount what exactly happened between the South Africans and Maori at

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<sup>2</sup> *Press*, 24 July 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

Ohinemutu.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the sporting press had overlooked the Ohinemutu hui during the 1921 tour.

While the Arawa memorial's primary grievance was Springbok racism against Maori, it alluded to the NZRFU's complicity in Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour of South Africa. It accused the Rugby Union of adopting the 'Springbok attitude' of sporting segregation in the selection of the 1928 All Blacks.<sup>5</sup> It also believed that the NZRFU had sacrificed the inclusionist ethos that imbued New Zealand sport and society. According to the Arawa, the Rugby Union had rejected 'a definite principle' of sporting democracy which recognised playing ability, 'regardless of race, creed, or colour'.<sup>6</sup>

The Arawa memorial had an unprecedented effect on Maori attitudes towards New Zealand and South African rugby relations. Unlike previous tours, Maori denunciation of South African sporting segregation was supported publicly by many Maori organisations and spokespeople. The memorial was given 'unqualified support' from the Akarana Maori Association - previously the solitary Maori group to castigate Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour.<sup>7</sup> The Akarana Maori Association also claimed that the memorial had nationwide backing from

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 July 1936.



Maori.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it was supported by Te Puea Herangi and the Waikato Maori.<sup>9</sup> Te Puea and Waikato, unlike the Arawa, had opposed Maori participation in the Great War and led a campaign against Maori conscription.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Te Puea had become a national Maori figure by the late 1920s, following the establishment of Turangawaewae Marae at Ngaruawahia.<sup>11</sup>

A number of Maori spokespeople offered conditional support for the Arawa memorial. Instead of advocating a full boycott of the 1937 tour, they hoped that the SARB would guarantee that the Springbok players view Maori as their equals. The Bishop of Aotearoa, Rev Frederick A. Bennett,<sup>12</sup> believed that Maori would have 'no feeling' against the Springboks if the SARB gave such an assurance.<sup>13</sup> The Marlborough Maori also supported the notion of a SARB guarantee of Springbok willingness to meet Maori as their equals. However, they were sceptical whether the SARB would be as obliging if Maori were part of an All Black touring team to South Africa.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Press*, 28 July 1936.

<sup>10</sup> King, "Between Two Worlds", pp. 290-291; Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*, p. 181.

<sup>11</sup> King, "Between Two Worlds", pp. 290-291.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 288, 293. Frederick Bennett was the first Bishop of Aotearoa. He was previously a member of the Young Maori Party alongside Apirana Ngata and Te Rangi Hiroa.

<sup>13</sup> *Press*, 28 July 1936.

<sup>14</sup> *Press*, 1 August 1936.

While the Arawa memorial attracted various degrees of support from Maoridom, it was never unanimously endorsed. A minority of Maori felt that a sporting and social boycott of the 1937 tour would prevent Maori from displaying the inclusionist nature of New Zealand to the Springboks. It remains conceivable that Maori disapproval of the memorial was overstated by the sporting press. It was limited to the North Island's East Coast, and a lone Tuahiwi (North Canterbury) resident, Te Ariatua Pitama. Furthermore, it was almost certainly inspired, on occasions, by personal and tribal envy of the Arawa.

An indication that the extent of Maori opposition to the Arawa memorial was inflated was presented by the *Christchurch Press*. Throughout 1936, it published the opinions of Te Ariatua Pitama on a regular basis, including a personal attack against the Arawa. He accused the Arawa, who often hosted overseas visitors at Rotorua, of 'commercialised' and 'spoilt' behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Although he had apparently no connection with Maori rugby, Pitama remarked that South Island Maori would play the Springboks if such a match was arranged.<sup>16</sup> His views were rejected immediately by North Canterbury Maori spokespeople, who offered 'wholehearted' support for the Arawa memorial. The Tuahiwi Football Club president, 'J. T. Piki', recalled the 'Springbok attitude' of the 1921

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<sup>15</sup> *Press*, 28 July 1936.

<sup>16</sup> *Press*, 25 July 1936.

tour.<sup>17</sup> While Piki failed to specify exactly what he meant by 'Springbok attitude', he was unquestionably referring to the Blakett cablegram against the Maori XV.

The idea that Maori should demonstrate their sporting and social inclusion to the Springboks was supported by East Coast Maori spokespeople and the local sporting press. The *Gisborne Times*, in an editorial, condemned the 'unsportsmanlike' and 'undignified' behaviour of the 1921 Springboks towards Maori.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, it believed that Maori should display their sportsmanship and 'social culture' to the Springboks.<sup>19</sup> A local Maori spokesperson, P. T. Tomoana, added that the Arawa memorial was supported only by Maori in the Auckland province. On a more personal note, he vilified the Arawa Maori as 'Te Arawa Mangai Nui' (Arawa with the big mouth).<sup>20</sup>

East Coast Maori opposition to the Arawa memorial, albeit from anonymous sources, was often inflated by the sporting press. A Maori Advisory Board and Tairāwhiti (Poverty Bay and East Coast) Association official felt

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<sup>17</sup> *Press*, 27 July 1936; Chester and McMillan, *Visitors*, pp. 114, 118; Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby: Volume One*, pp. 352-353. 'S. M. J. Piki', a Maori rugby representative between 1910 and 1913, is listed as an administrator in a photograph of the 1921 Maori XV. However, the *Christchurch Press* of 27 July 1936 refers to 'J. T. Piki', a Maori rugby representative who 'played' against the 1921 Springboks.

<sup>18</sup> *Gisborne Times*, 24 July 1936.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Press*, 27 July 1936.

that the Maori Advisory Board should have received the Arawa memorial before the NZRFU. He claimed that the memorial was opposed by Maori, and predicted that the Springboks would respect New Zealand's inclusionist tradition.<sup>21</sup> Wairoa-based 1921 Maori XV players suggested that Maori and Springbok should resolve their grievances on the playing field. They accused the Arawa of 'making a mountain out of a molehill'. Furthermore, they believed that Arawa rejection of sporting and social contact with the Springboks was related to their supposed lack of 'good footballers'.<sup>22</sup>

Pakeha sporting commentators, especially top-level rugby administrators, generally supported Maori sporting participation in relation to the 1937 tour. That some of the same administrators supported Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour of South Africa was overlooked by the sporting press. The NZRFU chairman, Stan Dean, officially advised the Arawa that 'the strongest and wisest course' of action was for the Springboks to respect New Zealand social custom.<sup>23</sup> He added that the inclusionist nature of New Zealand sport would act as a striking demonstration of racial 'co-operation and understanding' to the Springboks.<sup>24</sup> Canterbury Rugby Union administrators believed that Maori should play for their provincial

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<sup>21</sup> *Press*, 25 July 1936.

<sup>22</sup> *Press*, 28 July 1936.

<sup>23</sup> *Press*, 7 August 1936.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

teams against the Springboks. Their opinion was that the Maori Advisory Board should decide whether to arrange a Springbok-Maori match, instead of 'individual Maori' with 'coloured' views.<sup>25</sup>

The Arawa memorial, on occasions, received a mixed response from rugby spokespeople, especially those within Auckland rugby circles. The Auckland Rugby Union declined to officially comment on the memorial, as its theme was seen as 'too sensitive'.<sup>26</sup> More forthcoming were two players who had toured South Africa with New Zealand representative teams, 'Snow' Lucas (1919), and his brother, Fred Lucas (1928). They supported Maori sporting and social participation in the 1937 tour. On the other hand, they were emphatic that Maori inclusion in touring teams to South Africa would be 'impossible'.<sup>27</sup> A touch judge from the 1921 Springbok-Maori XV match, 'Tom' Jones, supported Maori participation in provincial matches against the Springboks. However, Jones, who was almost certainly in a better position than most to evaluate sporting relations between Springbok and Maori, felt it 'unwise' to schedule a game with the Maori XV.<sup>28</sup>

The public response to the Arawa memorial was followed by greater press recognition of New Zealand's inclusionist ethos in relation to rugby exchanges with

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<sup>25</sup> *Press*, 25 July 1936.

<sup>26</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 25 July 1936.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

South Africa. The *Christchurch Press*, in contrast to its approval of New Zealand and South African rugby contacts in 1921 and 1928, now argued that the Arawa memorial raised racial questions which transcended the playing field. It was 'only natural', an editorial claimed, that Maori wished to avoid the controversy of 1921.<sup>29</sup> It also mentioned that the idea of 'friendly association' and 'mutual respect' between Maori and Pakeha should not be imperiled by white South African racism.<sup>30</sup>

The racial context of rugby relations between New Zealand and South Africa was analysed, for the first time, within Labour Party publications. A correspondent to the pro-Labour *Standard*, 'O'Haggis', accused the NZRFU of 'inconsiderate' handling of Maori rugby, and described New Zealand and South Africa rugby tours as 'petty parochialism'.<sup>31</sup> 'O'Haggis' believed that the Rugby Union ranked imperial rugby rivalry ahead of race relations between Maori and Pakeha.<sup>32</sup> However, members of the Labour Government, including its Maori MP's, remained silent on the question of Maori sporting rights and rugby contacts with South Africa.

The extent of public debate over the Arawa memorial compelled the NZRFU into quelling Maori fears of Springbok insult. At a conference involving various Maori

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<sup>29</sup> *Press*, 27 July 1936.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Standard*, 29 July 1936.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

groups, the Rugby Union resolved to obtain a SARB assurance that the Springboks would view Maori as their equals, instead of 'members of an inferior race'.<sup>33</sup> If the SARB gave such an assurance, Maori would be 'only too willing' to play against the Springboks.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, support for the NZRFU's actions - and also for a match between the Maori XV and Springboks - emerged at a Gisborne hui.<sup>35</sup> While the 1937 tour itinerary failed to include a Springbok-Maori XV fixture, individual Maori remained eligible to play for their provinces, and, if chosen, the All Blacks.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Maori apprehension that the 1921 controversy would be repeated appeared to be allayed.

Support for the Arawa memorial from Anglo South African and expatriate New Zealand correspondents appeared in the *Natal Advertiser* (and New Zealand sporting press). A 1924 Springbok forward, 'Bill' Payn,<sup>37</sup> believed that Maori hesitation at playing the Springboks was 'regrettable', and the attitude of 'certain South Africans' disgraceful. He recalled that the 1921 Springboks, despite their racism towards black South Africans, were happy to accept Maori hospitality. Moreover, he added, some of the players had danced with

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<sup>33</sup> *Press*, 14 September 1936.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Press*, 15 September 1936.

<sup>36</sup> *Press*, 9 November 1936.

<sup>37</sup> See Greyvenstein, *Springbok Saga*, pp. 132, 287.

Maori women.<sup>38</sup> Yet, within South Africa, people of different skin colour could not attend comparable functions such as dances. Payn's views were supported by an anonymous expatriate New Zealander, who depicted Maori as a 'fine, noble and generous' people who were more likely to pity Springbok racism than to take offence at it.<sup>39</sup>

Anglo South African support of Maori sporting rights was complemented by denunciation of white racism against black South Africans. 'Bill' Payn, not content with berating Springbok racism against Maori, described white South African racial fears as 'irrational and childish'.<sup>40</sup> An anonymous correspondent described racial segregation as 'regrettable' politically and socially, and 'damnable' when it affected sport. Furthermore, he denounced the 'back-veldt' attitude that black South Africans are 'untouchable except with a sjambok (whip)'.<sup>41</sup>

Although the SARB remained silent on the prospect of Springbok-Maori contact, the 1937 Springboks would presumably respect the inclusionist custom of New Zealand. If fears existed that Maori would suffer racial insult, they were quelled with the arrival of the Springboks in New Zealand. The South African players were

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<sup>38</sup> *Press*, 5 September 1936.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*



apparently happy at the prospect of sporting and social contact with Maori.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, an Arawa spokesperson, H. Tai Mitchell, remarked that the Springbok expression of goodwill would be reciprocated by Maori throughout New Zealand. Mitchell's only regret was that the South Africans had delayed in stating their desire to meet Maori.<sup>43</sup> Had they not, then a Springbok-Maori XV game may have been scheduled.

Despite the non-scheduling of a match against the Maori XV, the Springboks played against Maori in several provincial games. Included in the combined Poverty Bay-Bay of Plenty-East Coast XV against the Springboks were five previous New Zealand Maori representatives.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, three Maori players were selected for the 1937 All Blacks. A Hawke's Bay prop forward and All Black from the 1936 season, Everard Jackson,<sup>45</sup> played in all three test matches along with 'Tori' Reid, the Hawke's Bay lock who represented the All Blacks during 1935 and 1936. Bill Phillips, a King Country winger, made his All Black debut in the second test, and was considered unlucky not to retain his place for the third test.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Press*, 23 July 1937.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Chester and McMillan, *Visitors*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>45</sup> See Chester and McMillan, *Encyclopedia*, p. 102. Everard Jackson's father, Frederick, was English-born and played for the 1908 Anglo-Welsh team.

<sup>46</sup> A. C. Parker, *The Springboks: 1891-1970*, 1970, p. 103.

The principal social occasion involving Maori and Springbok during the 1937 tour was a visit to Rotorua, several days before the third test. Ironically, the Arawa Maori acted as hosts to the Springboks. The Rotorua visit aroused minimal press coverage, apart from photographs in the *New Zealand Herald* which showed Maori women welcoming the Springbok players in traditional fashion.<sup>47</sup> The occasion was free of controversy, and the Springbok assistant manager, Alex de Villiers, remarked that the players were 'greatly impressed' with Rotorua. In particular, they enjoyed the concerts arranged for them by the Arawa Maori.<sup>48</sup>

The extent to which the Springboks were impressed by their visit to Rotorua can be appraised by remarks from Danie Craven, the Springbok vice-captain. While Craven was forthright with his racial views, the sporting press overlooked his commentary. On black-white relations in South Africa, Craven described the 'native problem' as very delicate. He argued that white South African attitudes of racial superiority were natural, as whites considered black South Africans to be 'very primitive'.<sup>49</sup> He ridiculed comparisons between black South Africans and Maori, but admitted to Springbok prejudices against Maori

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<sup>47</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 23 September 1937. Additional photographic evidence of apparently sociable contact between Maori and Springbok appears in Greyvenstein, p. 116.

<sup>48</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 22 September 1937.

<sup>49</sup> Cited by D. Cameron (Ed), *Memorable Moments in New Zealand Sport*, 1979, p. 22.

before the team's New Zealand arrival. Hence, a match against the Maori XV was not included on the Springbok itinerary.<sup>50</sup>

Danie Craven was not the only Springbok to express his views on South African race relations. The New Zealand public, through the sporting press, received a rural perspective of black-white relations from the Springbok captain, Phil Nel. Speaking as a Natal farmer, Nel described his own position as 'purely executive'. He simply had to "[tell] the natives their tasks for the day and they do them."<sup>51</sup> In contrast, Nel believed that New Zealand farmers had a 'rigorous' occupation.<sup>52</sup>

The sporting press reported a more violent aspect of South African race relations - the lynching of a black South African by a mob of white Vereeniging (Transvaal) residents.<sup>53</sup> When confronted with the news, the Springbok flanker, Lucas Strachan (who had worked as a Vereeniging police officer), dismissed the lynching. He believed that the locals would not commit such an act of violence.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, throughout the 1937 tour, New Zealand

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Press*, 19 August 1937.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September 1937. The lynching was supposedly in retaliation to the death of three Vereeniging police officers during a 'beer raid' clash with black residents.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* Danie Craven claimed that he was not surprised by reports of the lynching and felt it was 'probably true'.

political and sporting commentators remained silent on black-white relations in South Africa.

The 1937 Springbok tour offered not only a window on the issue of race relations, but also, by providing a point of convergence between sport, race and nationalism, opened up wider social issues. At the centre of these issues lay the changing meaning of imperial sporting contacts. The 1937 tour was largely devoid of the pious imperialist platitudes which accompanied earlier New Zealand and South African rugby tours. In both countries, Anglocentric identification had declined throughout the 1930s, although it was never a powerful aspect of Afrikaner society. Moreover, economic and political considerations within the Empire led to a weakening of imperial links between Britain and the white Dominions. By 1930, Britain had recalled empire loans from the Dominions to re-scale its budget.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the 1931 Statute of Westminster provided a legal manifestation of the 1926 Balfour Declaration. It confirmed Dominion parliamentary sovereignty and completed the process of full equality with Britain, albeit within the 'Commonwealth'.<sup>56</sup>

The Statute of Westminster effectively fulfilled the political goals of the South African Prime Minister,

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<sup>55</sup> Stoddart, "Sport, Culture and Postcolonial Relations", p. 126.

<sup>56</sup> McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, pp. 141-142.

James Hertzog. South Africa obtained national independence within the Commonwealth, and 'equality' with Britain.<sup>57</sup> The recognition of Afrikaans as an official language by the South African Party (SAP) was one of several factors in the formation of a coalition Government with National during 1933.<sup>58</sup> Afrikaner-Anglo equality was symbolised by the adoption of the Afrikaans anthem, 'Die Stem' (The Voice), alongside 'God Save The King'.<sup>59</sup> Yet, Hertzog, despite his anti-imperialist reputation, was described by press correspondents at the 1937 Imperial conference as one of the Empire's finest statesmen - although sometimes 'lacking in tact'.<sup>60</sup>

Despite achieving political equality with Britain, Afrikaner nationalist ideas took on a more extreme form. A 'Purified' National Party was established in 1934 from the Daniel Malan-led Cape branch of the National Party.<sup>61</sup> Malan and his supporters opposed fusion with Smuts, were openly distrustful of Anglos, and supported South African secession from the Commonwealth. The National Party also received backing from the 'Broederbond', a secret organisation advocating an exclusive form of nationalism

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<sup>57</sup> de Villiers, "Afrikaner Nationalism", p. 392.

<sup>58</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, 1994, pp. 111-112; de Villiers, p. 380. In 1934, National and the SAP amalgamated to form the 'United' South African National Party.

<sup>59</sup> Beinart, pp. 109-110.

<sup>60</sup> *Press*, 12 May 1937.

<sup>61</sup> de Villiers, pp. 380-382.

based on Afrikaner 'baasskapp' (domination).<sup>62</sup>

Indicative of the growing support for Afrikaner nationalism, as defined by the National Party, was its immediate electoral impact. In the 1938 General Election, National gained 247,000 votes and 27 Parliamentary seats.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations (FAK), established in 1929, had over 300 affiliated organisations by 1937. Linguistic and cultural groups represented one-third of the FAK. The remainder consisted of religious, educational, science and youth organisations.<sup>64</sup>

The growth of Afrikaner nationalism within South African political, linguistic, and cultural spheres does not seem to have flowed through to the selection of the 1937 Springboks. The team's ethnic composition was almost equally balanced between Anglos and Afrikaners. Most of the Anglos were backs and were from the coastal unions of Natal, Border and Western Province.<sup>65</sup> The Afrikaner players were concentrated in the forwards, with many from the Transvaal. As with preceding Springbok teams, a group of players (five) had either attended Stellenbosch University, or played for the Stellenbosch club.<sup>66</sup>

While South Africa loosened its imperial links with

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 398.

<sup>65</sup> Goodwin, *Who's Who of International Rugby*, passim.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

Britain during the 1930s, imperialist attitudes were also less conspicuous in New Zealand. The First Labour Government (elected in 1935) was noted for its internationalist approach to external affairs. Hitherto, the Reform Party, which had governed at the time of the 1921 and 1928 tours, was the epitome of overt Anglocentricism.<sup>67</sup> Labour's leader, the Australian-born Michael J. Savage, was perhaps the first New Zealand Prime Minister "to bring to his office a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the British monarchy."<sup>68</sup> New Zealand was active within the League of Nations, and served on the League Council between 1936 and 1938. It opposed Britain on the issue of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, and was the only Commonwealth nation that did not recognise the Italian conquest of Abyssinia.<sup>69</sup> Labour, despite its internationalism, did not loosen imperial political links to the same extent of South Africa. New Zealand, for instance, failed to ratify the Statute of Westminster until 1947.<sup>70</sup>

The loosening of imperial political relations following the Balfour Declaration coincided with the commencement of the British Empire Games. Based on the model of the Olympic Games, the Empire Games surpassed

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<sup>67</sup> Sinclair, *History of New Zealand*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>68</sup> M. McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy: New Zealand in the World since 1935*, 1993, p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 15-17; Sinclair, *History of New Zealand*, p. 277.

<sup>70</sup> McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, pp. 141-142.

rugby and cricket tours as the foremost imperial sporting event.<sup>71</sup> First held at Hamilton (Ontario), Canada, in 1930, the Games attracted teams from Britain, the Dominions and two crown colonies, Bermuda and British Guiana.<sup>72</sup> Athletes of African descent competed for teams such as British Guiana. Thus, it was expected that Asians and West Indian athletes would compete at the 1934 Empire Games in Johannesburg.<sup>73</sup>

The prospect of Asian and West Indian competitors at the Johannesburg British Empire Games was in direct conflict with South Africa's segregationist ethos. Unlike the 1919 and 1928 New Zealand rugby teams, Empire Games teams were not prepared to exclude darker skinned athletes. At the inaugural meeting of the Empire Games Federation in 1932, delegates (led by the Canadians) argued that host countries must realise and accept that no place existed at the Games for racial discrimination.<sup>74</sup> Anticipating that the South Africans would object to Asian and West Indian participation

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<sup>71</sup> R. Holt, *Sport and the British*, 1989, p. 224; Stoddart, "Sport, Culture and Postcolonial Relations", pp. 125-127.

<sup>72</sup> W. D. McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 1991, pp. 236-237; R. Palenski and T. Maddaford, *The Games*, 1983, p. 38. British teams competed at Empire (and Commonwealth) Games as England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

<sup>73</sup> The 1934 British Empire Games involved the teams which participated at Hamilton in 1930, in addition to Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Trinidad and Southern Rhodesia.

<sup>74</sup> Palenski and Maddaford, pp. 43, 53; Stoddart, "Sport, Culture and Postcolonial Relations", p. 127.



alongside white competitors, the Empire Games Federation took the 1934 Games from Johannesburg and awarded them to London.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the 1938 Empire Games at Sydney was tainted by racial controversy involving athletes from South Africa, Trinidad and Ceylon. A distance runner from Trinidad was physically assaulted by a South African at the team's quarters.<sup>76</sup>

As the British Empire Games replaced rugby and cricket as the principal vehicle of the sporting Empire, the 1937 tour was described by sporting commentators with less emphasis on imperial themes. The *Christchurch Press*, in an editorial, anticipated that the games would be played in 'the best spirit of rugby'. It added that New Zealanders were eager to repay the Springboks for the hospitality given to the 1928 All Blacks.<sup>77</sup> The dialogue at social events such as civic functions and teams dinners was also less imperialist than that of earlier tours. It usually centred on sporting themes, along with occasional references to the 'sportsmanlike' approach of the Springboks.

Imperialist clichés, while less overt than during previous rugby tours, were not totally absent during the 1937 tour. Before reaching New Zealand, the Springbok manager, Percy Day, remarked that an objective of the tour was to cement 'friendly relations' among 'Dominion

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Palenski and Maddaford, pp. 71-72.

<sup>77</sup> *Press*, 1 May 1937.

cousins'.<sup>78</sup> At a Government reception honouring the Springboks, the Prime Minister, Michael Savage, spoke of his South African counterpart, James Hertzog, as one of the most 'lovable' of men. Symbolic tribute to the Empire was given as the Springboks laid a wreath at the Wellington Citizens' War Memorial. They were accompanied by New Zealand and South African military veterans, former All Blacks, and various sporting administrators.<sup>79</sup>

The sporting public generally displayed less concern for the political context of the 1937 tour, and focused on its sporting aspect. Nonetheless, rugby followers apparently showed such great hospitality to the Springboks through social functions, that Percy Day, conscious that the main focus of the tour was sporting, requested their limitation.<sup>80</sup> Day repeated his praise of New Zealand generosity to the Springboks in his official post-tour review. He quoted the Wellington *Dominion*, when he referred to the 'nationwide enthusiasm' of New Zealand rugby followers for the Springboks.<sup>81</sup>

The 1937 Springbok tour of New Zealand, in comparison to previous rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa, was generally free of overt imperialist slogans and cultural controversy. The internationalist

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<sup>78</sup> *Press*, 15 May 1937, 21 August 1937.

<sup>79</sup> *Press*, 7 August 1937.

<sup>80</sup> *Press*, 17 August 1937.

<sup>81</sup> *Press*, 6 January 1938.

outlook of New Zealand and South African politicians produced a social climate that was less conducive to imperial investment in rugby tours. Moreover, the British Empire Games had superseded rugby as the leading exhibition of the sporting Empire. Thus, the 1937 tour was usually described by New Zealand political and sporting commentators as a sporting event, without wider imperial importance.

The prospect of cultural controversy between Maori and Springbok was averted during the 1937 tour - due to the 1936 Arawa memorial. It stimulated dialogue over the status of Maori within New Zealand and South African rugby contacts, through its proposal of a Maori boycott of the 1937 tour's sporting and social events. While it failed to gain unanimous approval, the Arawa memorial was supported by many Maori spokespeople. It achieved partial success, as a game between the Maori XV and Springboks was not scheduled. Maori rugby players, however, appeared for their provinces and the All Blacks. At times during the tour, several Springbok players spoke of South Africa's so-called 'native problem'. The sporting press failed (once again) to examine South African race relations.

The immediate impact of the 1936 Arawa memorial was to obtain a SARB assurance that the Springboks would recognise Maori as their equals. The Arawa reminded the Springboks, in particular, of the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand sport and society. It remained to be seen,

however, if similar action from Maori would force the NZRFU into acknowledging the ethos of racial inclusion, by selecting Maori for future rugby tours of South Africa.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The 1949 All Black Tour of South Africa:

*'I am not going to acquiesce in any damned Afrikanders saying Maori cannot go...To hell with them.'*  
(Sir Howard Kippenberger)

The 1949 All Black rugby tour of South Africa, not unlike the 1928 tour, was dominated by the negation of Maori sporting rights.<sup>1</sup> The NZRFU insisted once again that it was in the best interests of Maori not to tour South Africa. Yet, in comparison to the general acquiescence to Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour, opposition to an 'all white' 1949 team was more widespread. The volume of Maori objections to New Zealand and South African rugby relations was similar to that preceding the 1937 Springbok tour, as it was nationwide. Maori rugby players and administrators publicly opposed their exclusion for the first time. Moreover, organisations such as trade unions led the emergence of Pakeha opposition to rugby contacts with South Africa. Maori and Pakeha protests stemmed from a number of perspectives. Some believed that the best All Black team, irrespective of cultural background, should tour South Africa. Others suggested that the team should drop the

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<sup>1</sup> A proposed 1940 All Black tour of South Africa was cancelled due to the commencement of World War Two.

title of 'New Zealand All Blacks'. Vociferous protest notwithstanding, the majority of New Zealanders were silent over Maori exclusion. The imperial background of sporting relations between New Zealand and South Africa, however, was rarely mentioned by sporting commentators. Instead, they generally regarded the 1949 tour as a sporting event without wider political significance.

The degree of opposition to Maori exclusion from the 1949 tour of South Africa reflected a widespread post-war shift in New Zealand attitudes towards the status of Maori. World War Two was unquestionably a decisive factor towards re-shaping racial perceptions among Pakeha. The outbreak of hostilities resulted in many Maori volunteers for military service. The subsequent military reputation of the 28 (Maori) Battalion was interpreted by many Pakeha as confirmation of their equal citizenship. In contrast, limited pre-war objection to the negation of Maori sporting rights surfaced, when the All Blacks were scheduled to tour South Africa in 1940. With the commencement of World War Two in September 1939, the 1940 tour was cancelled.

Maori eligibility for the proposed 1940 All Black tour was initially ambiguous. A 1938 Maori rugby tour of Fiji,<sup>2</sup> organised by the NZRFU, was seen by some as a sign that Maori would be excluded from the 1940 tour. However,

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<sup>2</sup> Swan, *History of New Zealand Rugby Football: Volume One*, pp. 247, 507.

the appearance of the Maori and All Black prop forward of 1936-38, Everard Jackson, at the 1939 trials (to select the 1940 All Blacks) suggested that the NZRFU was considering Maori inclusion. After playing in the trial, Jackson was supposedly "told to go home...because no Maoris could go to South Africa."<sup>3</sup> As the 1940 team was never chosen, the truth of Everard Jackson's eligibility remains unknown.

The prospect of Maori exclusion from the proposed 1940 tour produced limited debate within the sporting press. Many New Zealanders undoubtedly felt that the team selected would comply with sporting and social segregation, not unlike the 1928 All Blacks. That the NZRFU had imposed its own version of sporting segregation by excluding Maori from the proposed tour was asserted by few commentators. John Morgan, secretary of the Canterbury Maori Association, believed that the tour was the 'acid test' for the Rugby Union on Maori sporting rights.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Edward Cullen, Labour Party MP for Hawke's Bay, predicted that Maori exclusion from the All Blacks may encourage a Maori sporting exodus to rugby league.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Newnham, *Apartheid is not a Game*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> *Press*, 7 August 1939.

<sup>5</sup> *Standard*, 27 July 1939. Cullen was alluding to Maori representation in the 1939 New Zealand rugby league tour of England. Of the six Maori players who were chosen for the 1939 tour (cut short due to the beginning of World War Two), four had played provincial rugby union, including Hawea Mataira, a 1934 All Black.

The suggestion that New Zealand rugby administrators applied a 'colour bar' to All Black teams was met with indignation by local rugby personalities. Norman McKenzie, selector-coach of the 1920s Hawke's Bay Ranfurly Shield team, commented that several Maori were in the current Hawke's Bay team,<sup>6</sup> including two recent All Blacks, Everard Jackson and 'Tori' Reid. The Canterbury Rugby Union president, John Moloney, added that provincial rugby unions were 'proud' of their Maori players.<sup>7</sup> The significance of Maori exclusion from the 1928 and proposed 1940 tours of South Africa, however, was overlooked by sporting commentators. Subsequently, the debate on sporting segregation against Maori subsided, due to the commencement of World War Two and ensuing cancellation of the 1940 tour.

During the Second World War, several Maori visited South Africa, albeit within a military (rather than sporting) context. Between 1940 and 1941, the Maori Battalion visited Cape Town on two occasions. The first was in May 1940 while en-route to Britain, when the soldiers were advised by their superiors to expect a 'cool' reception from white South Africans. If they were refused retail service or racially insulted, "they were not to make a fuss as it was the custom of the country."<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, the soldiers were 'tight lipped and

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<sup>6</sup> *New Zealand Herald*, 1 August 1939.

<sup>7</sup> *Press*, 2 August 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Gardiner, *Te Mura O Te Ahi*, pp. 37-38.



nervous', while at Cape Town.<sup>9</sup> However, during a second visit in February 1941, the Maori Battalion was advised by South African authorities that they would be treated "in exactly the same manner as any other British soldiers."<sup>10</sup> As the Maori Battalion was apparently free of white South African hostility, the prospect emerged that Maori All Blacks would receive a similar welcome within South Africa.

The hope that Maori All Blacks would tour South Africa was promoted not only by the Maori Battalion, but also the re-shaping of post-war racial perceptions throughout the Western world. The defeat of Nazi Germany was met with change in attitudes for many people, where social darwinist ideas of 'superior' and 'inferior' races lost much of their credibility. The end of World War Two also marked the beginning of European decolonisation in Asia, and the emerging black American push for full human rights. Yet, whether South Africa would acknowledge the changing racial perceptions of New Zealand and the world by accepting Maori rugby players as equals remained to be seen.

An indication that the NZRFU was considering Maori players for the 1949 tour of South Africa (scheduled initially for 1948) came from one of its executive member, James Prendeville. At a post-match function involving the 1946 Australian rugby team, Prendeville

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

remarked that the best available All Black team would tour South Africa, irrespective of the colour bar. His assertion was supported by the Australian and opposing Taranaki-King Country players at the function.<sup>11</sup>

As the prospect of Maori All Blacks touring South Africa was raised in New Zealand, the reaction from Afrikaner commentators was immediate and hostile. The Afrikaans-language newspaper, *Die Vaderland*, ran a front page heading, "No Colour Bar in Composition of Rugby Team".<sup>12</sup> *Die Transvaaler* (Johannesburg) published an article entitled "Politics in International Rugby", and remarked that an All Black team which included Maori would be unacceptable in South Africa.<sup>13</sup> It also alerted the SARB that the NZRFU intended to use rugby for 'political propaganda' by selecting Maori All Blacks.<sup>14</sup> The idea that Maori rugby players would provoke a racial crisis for white South Africans was reiterated by Professor H. B. Davel, president of the Northern Transvaal Rugby Union. He mentioned that South Africa could do without 'non-European' rugby players from other countries exacerbating the 'colour question'.<sup>15</sup>

Despite Afrikaner hostility to the possible inclusion of Maori on the 1949 tour, a number of South

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<sup>11</sup> *Press*, 28 August 1946.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Press*, 29 August 1946.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Press*, 30 August 1946.

African rugby players were eager to host Maori All Blacks. They referred to the military reputation of Maori during World War Two, and also mentioned that Maori and white South Africans fought alongside each other. Moreover, South African supporters of Maori inclusion alluded to Maori servicemen as 'grand sportsmen' who exhibited modest behaviour and 'impeccable manners'.<sup>16</sup> A former Springbok, Dr. Louis Babrow, recalled that Maori soldiers saved 'many young South African lives' at Sidi Rezegh (North Africa) during 1941. He also commented that the 1937 Springbok team (including himself) that toured New Zealand had accepted Maori hospitality, and were happy to play against Maori.<sup>17</sup>

The question of Maori sporting rights within South Africa, for the first time, transcended New Zealand and South African boundaries. In the United Kingdom, the *Manchester Guardian* described the opinions of *Die Transvaaler* as "the latest bit of grit to be thrown in the wheels of international sportsmanship."<sup>18</sup> It welcomed the news that a number of South African sporting identities supported equality of sporting rights for Maori and Pakeha in South Africa. The *Manchester Guardian* also anticipated an emphatic New Zealand response against a racially exclusive All Black team, in recognition of

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<sup>16</sup> *Press*, 29 August 1946, 30 August 1946.

<sup>17</sup> *Press*, 30 August 1946.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

Maori sporting and wartime service.<sup>19</sup>

As support for Maori inclusion on the 1949 tour was received from overseas sporting commentators, the NZRFU adopted an ambiguous position. Its chairman, Stan Dean, stated that Maori would be considered for selection, only if the SARB assured the NZRFU that they would be welcomed as equals. He recalled that the Rugby Union had considered including Maori players on the 1928 All Black tour of South Africa.<sup>20</sup> At the time, it felt that the exclusion of Maori was in their best interests.<sup>21</sup> However, the Maori Battalion's wartime presence in South Africa indicated that Maori rugby players no longer needed 'protection' from white South African racism.

The social repercussions of Maori All Blacks in South Africa was raised by South African-based New Zealanders in the sporting press. Many believed that Maori players would be accepted by white South Africans only within a strictly sporting capacity. On the other hand, their presence at obligatory social events such as dinners and dances would cause 'a major problem'.<sup>22</sup> In particular, Maori, when unaccompanied by Pakeha All Blacks, would be refused entry into hotels, restaurants

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Press*, 3 September 1946.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Press*, 7 January 1947. Undoubtedly, a great fear of white South Africans was the prospect of social contact between Maori All Blacks and white women at social functions such as dances.

and other public areas designated as 'white'. Expatriate New Zealanders in South Africa also mentioned that Maori players were targets for racist insults from local bigots,<sup>23</sup> in spite of the wartime acceptance of the Maori Battalion.

The possibility of Maori inclusion on the 1949 tour weakened with the announcement of a 1948 Maori rugby tour of Fiji.<sup>24</sup> It appeared likely that Maori players would be excluded once again from South Africa. The 1948 tour of Fiji was dismissed by the Labour Party newspaper, the *Standard*, as a 'palliative' to prepare Maori for their exclusion from the 1949 tour.<sup>25</sup> It accused the NZRFU of repressing discussion over Maori eligibility through its own 'iron curtain'.<sup>26</sup> The *Standard*, moreover, placed Maori exclusion within a South African political context. It depicted the South African Prime Minister, Daniel Malan, as a 'champion of the colour bar', who would certainly support the idea of Maori exclusion from South Africa.<sup>27</sup>

The *Standard* continued to be the most vociferous of New Zealand newspapers on the theme of Maori sporting rights in South Africa. Its inference that the 1948 tour of Fiji was arranged to pacify Maori following their

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<sup>23</sup> *Press*, 14 February 1947.

<sup>24</sup> *Press*, 1 March 1947, 8 August 1947.

<sup>25</sup> *Standard*, 8 July 1948.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

exclusion from the 1949 tour was reinforced when a 1949 Maori tour of Australia was scheduled.<sup>28</sup> Maori exclusion was confirmed when the NZRFU stated that only players 'wholly of European blood' would be chosen for the 1949 tour.<sup>29</sup> According to the Rugby Union, its decision was made in the presence of the Maori Advisory Board secretary, Kingi Tahiwī, and was in accordance with Maori Advisory Board opinion.<sup>30</sup> The NZRFU, by insisting that it had to respect South African racial customs, neglected once again the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand sport and society.

The NZRFU decision to exclude Maori from the 1949 tour immediately raised critical questions from the sporting press. Had it ever discussed Maori eligibility with the SARB? If so, what was the South African position? And, if not, why had the Rugby Union failed to raise the issue of Maori inclusion? However, the NZRFU chairman, Alan St. Clair Belcher (who had replaced Stan Dean in 1947), would not answer any questions on Maori eligibility.<sup>31</sup>

The manner that the NZRFU arrived at its decision to exclude Maori from the 1949 tour was condemned immediately by Ned Parata, the unofficial elder statesman of Maori rugby. Parata, who was the Maori

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<sup>28</sup> *Press*, 6 August 1948.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Press*, 7 August 1948.

Advisory Board chairman until 1926, was made a NZRFU life member in 1943. In a telegram to the NZRFU, he failed to denounce Maori exclusion explicitly, yet condemned the NZRFU for its decision without consulting Maori rugby administrators:

Strongly protest action your council regarding Maoris for South African tour...Your council has deliberately failed in its duty to discuss matter with Maori Advisory Board who are representatives of all Maori players and our Maori people.<sup>32</sup>

The Maori Advisory Board, Parata claimed, had never even discussed Maori participation in the 1949 tour. He concluded that any comment from Kingi Tahiwiri 'could only be his own personal opinion'.<sup>33</sup>

Many past and present Maori rugby players spoke out for the first time against their exclusion from the 1949 tour. Hitherto, their exclusion from the 1928 tour failed to produce opposition from Maori rugby spokespeople. The Taupo Rugby Sub-Union president (and former New Zealand Maori player), Arthur Grace, suggested that the 1949 team should drop the title 'All Blacks'. Maori exclusion would encourage many, he added, to convert to rugby league.<sup>34</sup> The 1948 New Zealand Maori captain, Johnny Smith, wanted the 1949 team to amend the title of 'All Blacks' to 'New Zealand European All Blacks'.<sup>35</sup> Smith, an All Black

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<sup>32</sup> *Press*, 9 August 1948.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Standard*, 7 October 1948.

<sup>35</sup> *Standard*, 2 September 1948.

centre three-quarter in 1946 and 1947, was regarded by many commentators as 'one of New Zealand's greatest mid-field backs'.<sup>36</sup>

Contemporary Maori political figures, like their sporting peers, entered into dialogue on the negation of their sporting rights for the first time. The MP for Northern Maori, Tapihana Paikea, also wanted the All Blacks renamed; his preferred title was the 'New Zealand European team'. Paikea told the New Zealand House of Representatives that the 1947 All Black halfback, Vince Bevan, was 'penalised both ways'.<sup>37</sup> Bevan was excluded from the 1949 tour and 1948 Maori rugby tour of Fiji. He apparently had 'too little Maori blood' to be eligible for Maori teams,<sup>38</sup> yet too much for South African tastes.

The discrepancy over the status of Maori soldiers and rugby players in South Africa was raised by both Apirana Ngata (no longer active in Parliamentary politics), and Eruera Tirikatene, MP for Southern Maori. Ngata recalled that the Maori Battalion had received the same hospitality as Pakeha soldiers in Cape Town during World War Two. Maori All Blacks, in comparison, were unwelcome in South Africa. Ngata also stressed that Pakeha politicians, unlike Maori, were silent over Maori

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<sup>36</sup> Chester and McMillan, *Encyclopedia*, p. 183.

<sup>37</sup> *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 282 (1948), p. 2189.

<sup>38</sup> *Standard*, 23 September 1948.



exclusion.<sup>39</sup> Tirikatene remarked that 'all rugby-loving Maori former Servicemen' would expect the 1949 team to travel without the title 'New Zealand All Blacks'. He believed, like Ned Parata, that the NZRFU's decision without Maori consultation was an insult to Maori.<sup>40</sup>

Whereas Maori indignation at their exclusion from the 1949 tour was eloquent and often outspoken, it was usually restricted to sporting and political spokespeople. However, Pakeha objection to sporting segregation, despite its initial silence (with the exception of the *Standard*), escalated following the NZRFU's decision to exclude Maori. The *Christchurch Press*, in an editorial, was 'disturbed' by Ned Parata's revelation that the NZRFU and Maori Advisory Board had not even discussed Maori eligibility.<sup>41</sup> It remarked that it may be wiser to cancel the 1949 tour, rather than jeopardise the 'happy relationship' between Maori and Pakeha.<sup>42</sup> Previously, the *Press* viewed Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour as necessary for their 'protection'. On the other hand, it emphasised the importance of local race relations ahead of rugby contacts with South Africa before the 1937 Springbok tour.

The correlation between Maori exclusion and New Zealand rugby success against South Africa was emphasised

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<sup>39</sup> *Press*, 7 September 1948.

<sup>40</sup> *Press*, 2 September 1948.

<sup>41</sup> *Press*, 11 August 1948.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

by the sporting press before the 1949 tour, not unlike that preceding the 1928 tour. It had previously considered the exclusion of George Nepia and Jimmy Mill from the 1928 tour as a 'fullback and halfback problem'. Likewise, the *Standard*, in a leading article, lamented Maori absence from the 1949 tour. It regarded the exclusion of Vince Bevan and Johnny Smith, in particular, as a selectorial nightmare.<sup>43</sup> Peter Smith (brother of Johnny Smith) and 'Ben' Couch were two Maori All Blacks who were also ineligible for the 1949 tour. Ben Couch was subsequently the National Government's Minister of Police and Maori Affairs during the 1981 Springbok tour of New Zealand. He achieved notoriety in a television interview, when he appeared to 'support' apartheid in South Africa.<sup>44</sup>

The increased promotion of Maori sporting rights from the sporting press was followed by similar backing from representatives of war veterans' groups and trade unions. Perhaps the most acclaimed Pakeha denunciation of Maori exclusion from the 1949 tour was from Major-General Sir Howard Kippenberger, Dominion President of the Returned Services' Association (RSA). An officer in the New Zealand Army during World War Two, Kippenberger ranked alongside Bernard Freyberg and Charles Upham as a

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<sup>43</sup> *Standard*, 19 August 1948.

<sup>44</sup> R. Shears and I. Gidley, *Storm out of Africa*, 1981, pp. 33-34.

New Zealand war hero.<sup>45</sup> At a September 1948 Christchurch RSA meeting, he stated that he would protest personally to the NZRFU against Maori exclusion. Kippenberger remarked, in forthright manner: "I am not going to acquiesce in any damned Afrikanders [sic] saying [Maori] cannot go...To hell with them."<sup>46</sup> He also paid tribute to Maori Battalion military service, and claimed that the RSA was the only organisation supporting the 'rights of equality' for Maori.<sup>47</sup>

The RSA, in spite of Kippenberger's assertion, was not the only veterans' organisation that supported Maori equality of sporting rights. The Wellington branch secretary of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (servicemens') Association, R. Childs, predicted that members throughout New Zealand 'would emphatically support' demands that the 1949 team discard the title of 'New Zealand All Blacks'.<sup>48</sup> He mentioned the 'splendid' military reputation of Maori, and considered their exclusion from the 1949 tour as a national insult. He also suggested a nationwide protest against the enforcement of South African racial policies 'down the

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<sup>45</sup> Phillips, *A Man's Country?* pp. 202-205.

<sup>46</sup> *Press*, 2 September 1948.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Press*, 3 September 1948. The various branches of the Armed Forces often formed their own veterans' groups following World War Two. The members of these groups were also members of the RSA.

throats' of New Zealanders.<sup>49</sup>

New Zealand trade unions, for the first time, questioned the morality of New Zealand and South African sporting relations. Union condemnation of Maori exclusion, moreover, pre-dated the more celebrated protest from Kippenberger. At a stop-work meeting during August 1948, the Wellington Waterside Workers' Union urged the cancellation of the 1949 tour, due to the exclusion of Maori. The Watersiders' union, which included many Maori, considered the NZRFU's decision 'completely undemocratic', an insult to Maori and contrary to the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand society.<sup>50</sup> Thus, according to the Watersiders', the selection of the 1949 team represented an attack on a 'national principle'.<sup>51</sup>

Trade union condemnation of Maori exclusion surfaced on a national basis following the publication of Kippenberger's protest. The Federation of Labour's national executive resolved that the 1949 All Black team was unrepresentative of New Zealand society.<sup>52</sup> Several Union officials were eager to persuade individual All Blacks to stand down from the 1949 tour,<sup>53</sup> although whether they succeeded remains obscure. The national

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Press*, 13 August 1948.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Press*, 7 September 1948.

<sup>53</sup> *Press*, 8 September 1948.

secretary of the Watersider Workers' Union, Toby Hill, claimed that Kippenberger gave 'the green light' to union consideration on whether to provide transportation for the 1949 tour.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the Otago Trades Council was 'disgusted' at 'the subservient action' of the NZRFU in excluding Maori. Like a number of Maori politicians, it opposed the use of the title 'All Blacks' by the 1949 team.<sup>55</sup>

Coinciding with trade union and war veterans opposition to Maori exclusion from the 1949 tour, the negation of Maori sporting rights was vigorously condemned by newspaper correspondents. The majority of letter writers alluded to the inclusionist ethos of New Zealand society, including the military service of Maori. A letter published in the *Christchurch Press* during August 1948 from Varian J. Wilson reflected the sentiments of many correspondents. Wilson believed that the NZRFU decision to exclude Maori had 'aided and abetted the racialism of the South Africans'.<sup>56</sup> He mentioned that the 'Springboks' had a high opinion of the Maori Battalion. A Maori RNZAF sergeant, for instance, was treated with courtesy and respect, while in Durban. He also remarked that several 'extreme racialists' had conceded that their eyes were 'opened' through contact

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<sup>54</sup> *Press*, 3 September 1948.

<sup>55</sup> *Press*, 8 September 1948.

<sup>56</sup> *Press*, 9 August 1948.

with Maori.<sup>57</sup>

A limited number of correspondents, usually South Africans, or New Zealanders who had visited South Africa, supported Maori exclusion. The common theme of their argument was the prospect of white hostility towards Maori.<sup>58</sup> This was alluded to by Eric 'Fritz' Snow, a 1928 All Black to South Africa. He contended that white South Africans were oblivious to the notion of racial equality,<sup>59</sup> and would treat Maori in the way that they treated black South Africans. Likewise, the editor of the *Rugby Almanack of New Zealand* and member of the 1924 'Invincibles', 'Read' Masters,<sup>60</sup> claimed to speak for the majority of rugby players when he accused opponents of Maori exclusion of 'irresponsible meddling'.<sup>61</sup>

South African rugby officials and the Afrikaner nationalist press continued its crusade for sporting segregation. Andries Pienaar, president of the SARB since 1927,<sup>62</sup> dismissed New Zealand protests against Maori exclusion as originating from 'people in the pavilion and on the rope'.<sup>63</sup> *Die Transvaaler* claimed that Kippenberger

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Press*, 25 August 1948, 23 September 1948.

<sup>59</sup> *Press*, 4 September 1948.

<sup>60</sup> See Chester and McMillan, *Encyclopedia*, p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> *Press*, 9 September 1948.

<sup>62</sup> *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Vol. IV, p. 457. Pienaar was president of the South African Cricket Association during 1947 and 1948.

<sup>63</sup> *Press*, 4 September 1948.

had insulted the majority of white South Africans with his 'damned Afrikanders' quip.<sup>64</sup> *Die Burger* (Cape Town) accused 'the Kippenbergers of New Zealand' of forcing their racial beliefs on South Africa. An All Black team containing Maori, according to *Die Burger*, would be used by 'communists' for political purposes.<sup>65</sup> The English-language *Cape Times* regretted that 'well-meaning' New Zealanders sought racial controversy over Maori exclusion. Its terse response to the idea of Maori All Blacks in South Africa was that 'Europeans and non-Europeans' do not 'mingle' in South African sport.<sup>66</sup>

The NZRFU confirmed its decision to exclude Maori players from the 1949 tour at a meeting with the Maori Advisory Board in October 1948. It stated that the Maori Advisory Board gave its unanimous support to the Rugby Union in a resolution signed by Ned Parata (despite his earlier indignation) and Kingi Tahiwiri.<sup>67</sup> The Maori Advisory Board resolution, according to the NZRFU, had reaffirmed its decision before the 1928 tour of South Africa (with 'unanimous' yet unreported approval from Maori elders) to recommend the exclusion of Maori from rugby tours of South Africa.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Press*, 8 September 1948. Kippenberger conceded that his 'damned Afrikanders' quip was 'quite improper'.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Press*, 2 October 1948.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

The majority of New Zealanders continued to view New Zealand and South African rugby relations separately from wider political and social factors. Furthermore, with news of the Maori Advisory Board's support for Maori exclusion, the sporting press reverted to portraying the 1949 tour as merely a sporting event. Criticism of sporting segregation became diluted, or on occasions, was reversed. The *Christchurch Press*, in a rugby-dominated editorial, considered Maori exclusion as 'realistic though distasteful'.<sup>69</sup> At the state farewell of the 1949 team, the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser 'regretted' the omission of Maori.<sup>70</sup> Eruera Tirikatene disclaimed his earlier view that the All Blacks without Maori was 'an insult'. Instead, he depicted the players as ambassadors of 'the Maori people'.<sup>71</sup>

New Zealand indignation over Maori exclusion from the 1949 tour failed, once again, to address the broader question of racial discrimination against black South Africans. While the 1949 tour coincided with the inception of apartheid, black-white inequalities were rarely mentioned by sporting commentators. The main goal of the All Blacks, like their 1928 predecessors, was sporting instead of political. However, the players observed the outbreak of inter-racial violence at Port Elisabeth during the match against Eastern Province. Play

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<sup>69</sup> *Press*, 4 October 1948.

<sup>70</sup> *Press*, 12 April 1949.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*



was stopped on two occasions and several people hospitalised, due to fighting between white and 'Coloured' rugby followers.<sup>72</sup> As the Eastern Province game was the only reported instance of racial controversy surrounding the All Blacks, the sporting press resumed its rugby-centred coverage of the tour.

The debate over Maori sporting rights preceding the 1949 All Black tour overshadowed the idea that New Zealand and South African rugby contacts were imperialist occasions. Sporting and political commentators viewed the 1949 tour simply as a sporting event, without resorting to imperialist platitudes. That the political context of New Zealand and South Africa was often averse to imperialism, reflected the absence of its investment in rugby. South African politics, in particular, became increasingly nationalist following World War Two, and was a factor in the decline of Jan Smuts, almost certainly South Africa's most imperial-minded Prime Minister.<sup>73</sup>

The National Party victory at the 1948 South African Election represented the political triumph of Afrikaner nationalism. It subsequently gained notoriety through the introduction of an extreme form of racial segregation

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<sup>72</sup> *Press*, 13 June 1949.

<sup>73</sup> L. Thompson, *History of South Africa*, p. 162. Jan Smuts was influential in South Africa's decision to support Britain at the beginning of World War Two. He consequently became Prime Minister of the United Government, after James Hertzog's resignation.

known as apartheid (apartness).<sup>74</sup> Within the political context of post-war Afrikaner nationalism, Springbok test and touring teams became dominated by Afrikaners. In later years, the Anglo South African writer (and renowned political fugitive), Donald Woods, argued that the Afrikaner secret society, the 'Broederbond', believed that Springbok rugby was 'insufficiently Afrikaans'.<sup>75</sup> Out of 24 Springbok representatives during the 1949 test series, 20 (83%) were Afrikaner. Furthermore, almost 50% of the Afrikaner Springboks were from the Afrikaner-dominated Transvaal, Orange Free State and Northern Transvaal Rugby Unions.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the alleged Broederbond influence on Springbok rugby, Felix du Plessis, reported to be a supporter of the opposition United Party, captained the 1949 Springboks. Under his leadership, South Africa achieved an unassailable 3-0 lead going into the fourth test match. However, du Plessis, despite his high standard of play and leadership, was not chosen for the final test team. Subsequently, Donald Woods contended that the Broederbond was the rumoured force behind du Plessis' non-selection.<sup>77</sup> That he was replaced as Springbok captain by an Anglo, Basil Kenyon, indicated

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 186. The term 'apartheid' was coined by Afrikaner intellectuals during the 1930s.

<sup>75</sup> Woods, *Black and White*, pp. 42-43, 45.

<sup>76</sup> Goodwin, *Who's Who of International Rugby*, *passim*.

<sup>77</sup> Woods, p. 45.

that Broederbond influence of Springbok selection policy seemed unlikely.

The context of Afrikaner nationalism ensured the withering of imperialist slogans from South African commentators during the 1949 tour. A civic function held following the team's arrival at Cape Town on 10 May 1949, attracted the hierarchy of the SARB and National Government, including the Prime Minister, Daniel Malan. The focus of discussion at the Cape Town function was the resumption of New Zealand and South African rugby rivalry, rather than Empire loyalty and co-operation.<sup>78</sup> The only reference to the sporting Empire was the addition of a post-tour match between the All Blacks and a Western Province Town XV. The receipts from the game were set aside as travelling funds for South African sports team to compete at the 1950 British Empire Games in Auckland.<sup>79</sup>

New Zealand political and sporting commentators, like their South African counterparts, usually viewed the 1949 tour as an essentially sporting event. On occasions, the tour was placed within an internationalist setting.<sup>80</sup> Despite the opposition National Party's apparent

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<sup>78</sup> *Press*, 11 May 1949, 12 May 1949.

<sup>79</sup> *Press*, 20 September 1949.

<sup>80</sup> McKinnon, *Independence and Foreign Policy*, pp. 57-58, 61. New Zealand was a charter member of the United Nations (UN) following its 1945 inception. Moreover, the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, was a firm supporter of internationalist concepts such as the UN and universal collective security.

commitment to the British Empire,<sup>81</sup> its acting leader, Keith Holyoake, described the All Blacks as 'ambassadors and emissaries'.<sup>82</sup> Imperialist slogans remained absent from politicians and sporting administrators following the All Blacks' return to New Zealand. At a Parliamentary reception, both Peter Fraser and the leader of the National Party, 'Sid' Holland referred to the players' sportsmanship. The All Blacks, despite a 0-4 test series 'whitewash', were described as 'true sportsmen and New Zealanders'.<sup>83</sup>

The 1949 All Black tour of South Africa was usually portrayed by New Zealand and South African commentators as a sporting occasion without wider political significance. Neither imperialism nor internationalism were recurring themes of discussion during the 1949 tour. Racial factors, on the other hand, dominated the selection of the All Blacks. Maori players were initially hopeful that they would be considered for selection, yet were once again excluded. In contrast to the 1928 and cancelled 1940 tours, a vocal minority of New Zealanders - Maori and Pakeha - publicly supported the selection of the best team, irrespective of colour. However, the

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<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 26, 59. National believed Labour's internationalism was disloyal to Britain and the Commonwealth. It was suspicious of international organisations such as the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations.

<sup>82</sup> *Press*, 12 April 1949.

<sup>83</sup> *Press*, 15 October 1949.

majority view within New Zealand was that the 1949 All Blacks respect South African social and sporting segregation. Like previous tours, the 1949 tour did not arouse public criticism of racial segregation - which by 1949 was referred to as apartheid.

Although the 1949 tour represented a continuation of New Zealand and South African rugby relations, the cultural cost of such exchanges had generated increased public indignation. The NZRFU was thus faced with a decision on the future of its contacts with South African rugby. It could continue with the status quo of Maori exclusion, and provoke greater public opposition. On the other hand, it could insist that the SARB accept Maori rugby players on future tours to South Africa, despite sporting and social segregation. Maori All Blacks in South Africa did not become a reality until 1970, when three part-Maori and one part-Samoan were chosen as All Black tourists. By this date, many New Zealanders were opposed to sporting contacts with South Africa. Their opposition now rested on the wider issue of New Zealand's sporting association with apartheid.

## CONCLUSION

The published literature which recounts rugby football contacts between New Zealand and South Africa to 1950 has undoubtedly constructed a narrow depiction of such sporting relations. It consisted typically of newspapers, books and diaries. The authors have in the main been sports journalists, rugby administrators and former players. Their objectives have been to produce a narrative of sporting contests. Histories of this kind simply provide a sports-oriented chronicle of players, games, and tours between 1921 and 1949. The wider social and political context of New Zealand and South African rugby relations is ignored, or at best, marginalised. They collectively encouraged the classic sophism among the New Zealand public that 'sport and politics do not mix'. Sophistry aside, it is impossible for sport to exist outside of wider society, and New Zealand rugby is not exempt from political and social influence. In particular, rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa to 1950 illuminate two distinct social themes - sporting imperialism on the one hand, and race relations on the other.

Racial attitudes throughout New Zealand and South

African rugby relations to 1950 generally reflected the social darwinist notion of 'superior' and 'inferior' races, which was predominant throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, rugby, although a 'white' sport, produced divergent patterns of racial participation in New Zealand and South Africa. In South Africa, black (African and 'Coloured') rugby was segregated from the white game, and thus reflected racial segregation throughout wider society. Black rugby players could perform with and against each other, but not with nor against white players. Moreover, segregation was implicitly condoned by New Zealand and British sporting administrations, through their relations with South African rugby. From 1891, 'official' South African rugby (and other sports) teams competing within the imperial sporting network represented only white South Africa. Attempts by black sports teams to play overseas, such as the 1911 proposal for a South African 'Coloured' rugby tour of New Zealand (during 1912), were rejected by Dominion sporting bodies.

New Zealand rugby was similar to the South African game in that it also mirrored the society that it was part of. New Zealand society generally viewed itself as inclusionist, although some commentators may well suggest 'assimilationist' as a more fitting portrayal. Yet, unlike South African rugby, the New Zealand game reflected the inclusionist ethos of wider society. Maori usually played alongside and against Pakeha rugby players at club and

provincial level. They were also a salient feature of New Zealand national teams. The visible success of Maori on the playing field vis-a-vis wider New Zealand society undoubtedly fuelled clichés which celebrated racial 'equality' between Maori and Pakeha. Maori rugby prowess was a sign of their inclusion into Pakeha sporting culture. Their inclusion into wider New Zealand society, however, was often limited due to their socio-economic distance from Pakeha.

The emergence of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa raised a number of racial issues which, with the benefit of hindsight, were inadequately resolved by the NZRFU and SARB. By rejecting the proposed 1912 'Coloured' rugby tour of New Zealand, the NZRFU simultaneously acknowledged the 'official' status of the white SARB. For the next eighty years, the Rugby Union recognised only SARB teams, and thus, cultivated links with an overtly racist sporting administration. Black South African rugby players were denied the opportunity of touring outside South Africa, and playing against teams that were racially inclusive. Had the 1912 'Coloured' tour materialised, the players would have almost certainly noted the inclusionist ethos of New Zealand sport and society. The tour's cancellation thus ensured that black rugby players were denied the opportunity to transplant the notion of racially inclusive sport to a South African context.

The selection of racially exclusive South African



rugby teams was generally accepted by New Zealand society up to, and beyond 1950. The absence of black Springboks was never discussed publicly within rugby, political or press circles. Sporting commentators unquestionably held the opinion that racial segregation in South African sport and society was only that country's concern. On the other hand, a number of Maori and Pakeha spokespeople condemned the application of South African racial beliefs towards Maori rugby players. Local criticism of the South African 'colour line' within a New Zealand (but not South African) context, nonetheless reflected the equally social darwinist view of Maori racial 'superiority' over black South African.

The most obvious illustration of social darwinist ideas in relation to New Zealand and South African rugby contacts took place during the 1921 Springbok tour of New Zealand. The 1921 tour was infamous for the Blackett cablegram, which echoed the racial beliefs of most white South Africans. It was denounced for its portrayal of the New Zealand Maori XV as a 'band of coloured men'. New Zealand commentators - Maori and Pakeha - shared the white South African belief that black South Africans were racially 'inferior'. Maori, however, were ostensibly regarded by Pakeha as 'equal'. Through their social darwinist views, critics of the Blackett cablegram such as Te Rangi Hiroa ultimately displayed selective morality. Despite the apparent racial double standards of Maori and Pakeha commentators opposed to segregation,

Blackett's slur against the Maori XV was not condemned by the players themselves, nor by wider Maori society.

Racial hypocrisy within New Zealand was evident before, and during the 1937 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand. The absence of black Springboks, in addition to racial inequality within South Africa, was once again overlooked by sporting commentators. Instead, the fear that white South African racism would appear during the 1937 tour instigated protests from Maori individuals and iwi. Their concerns were encapsulated through a memorial from the Arawa confederation to the NZRFU. It threatened a Maori boycott of games and social occasions such as hui involving the 1937 Springboks, to avoid racial insult. Yet, a minority of Maori (amplified by the sporting press) felt that they should demonstrate sporting and social inclusion to the Springboks. Consequently, the Arawa memorial had a mixed effect, as Maori appeared for their provinces (and the All Blacks) against the Springboks. The South Africans respected the equal citizenship of Maori and Pakeha, and attended a Rotorua hui (in similar manner to other overseas guests).

The Arawa memorial almost certainly inspired the initial appearance of white South African opposition to sporting segregation in relation to New Zealand and South African rugby exchanges. It originated from Anglo South African and expatriate New Zealand commentators, and attempted to juxtapose segregation with Afrikaner racial bigotry. Indeed, during the 1937 Springbok tour,

Afrikaner players admitted to social darwinist attitudes. They felt that white perceptions of racial superiority to black South Africans were 'natural', yet dismissed similar comparisons between Maori and black South Africans.

Maori rugby players, while recognised by white South Africans as equal within New Zealand, were classified as 'Coloured' under South African sporting and social custom. The negation of their sporting rights represented the greatest example of racial double standards within New Zealand and South African rugby relations to, and beyond 1950. It remains unclear whether the decision to exclude Maori players was made by the SARB and NZRFU in conjunction, or by the NZRFU acting alone. Paternalist factors were put forward by rugby administrators in excluding Maori. It feared that Maori players would be humiliated by segregationist laws and customs, in addition to racist abuse from white South Africans. It also believed that the All Blacks were duty-bound to respect South Africa's segregationist ethos, in the same manner that Springbok teams respected New Zealand's inclusionist tradition.

Maori exclusion from the 1928 and 1949 tours had immediate sporting and social consequences. The absence of several outstanding Maori All Blacks (including George Nepia, one of the 'greats' of New Zealand rugby) may have cost test series victories for the 1928 and 1949 All Blacks. Moreover, the inclusionist custom of New Zealand

sport was sacrificed by the NZRFU to enable the tours to proceed. However, Maori exclusion from the 1928 tour failed to arouse widespread protest from the sporting press. Instead, commentators merely bemoaned the lack of quality players to replace Maori All Blacks such as George Nepia and Jimmy Mill. The only examples of dissent that alluded to the wider moral issue of Maori exclusion were from the Labour Mayor of Christchurch, John Archer, and the Akarana Maori Association.

The exclusion of Maori players from the 1949 tour generated much greater protest from New Zealanders, than that surrounding the 1928 tour. Events during, and after World War Two contributed to increased opposition to sporting segregation. New Zealanders recognised similarities between the defeated Nazi regime, and South Africa's Afrikaner Nationalist Government (elected in 1948). Many Maori had fought in the Second World War, which, from a Pakeha perspective, entrenched the equal status between the two. More specifically, the Maori Battalion had visited South Africa twice and were received no differently to other Allied soldiers by white South Africans. Hence, the NZRFU had apparently little reason to 'protect' Maori players from the racist excesses of South African society.

A feature of New Zealand opposition to Maori exclusion from the 1949 tour was that from war veterans' organisations and trade unions. Implicit in such protests was the adage that the inclusionist ethos imbued all

aspects of New Zealand society. However, political condemnation to Maori exclusion was generally absent, with the exception of Maori parliamentarians. The bulk of politicians simply conformed to the idea of remaining aloof from sporting affairs.

Throughout the racial controversy of the 1928 and 1949 All Black tours, New Zealand dissent remained within so-called 'respectable' avenues of protest. It was manifested often through press releases from eminent individuals and organisations, along with numerous letters to newspaper editors. The level of dissent did not reach the point of petitions or street marches. Ten years would elapse before opposition, in the form of public 'direct action' protests and a nationwide petition, would emerge against the 1960 'all white' All Black team to South Africa.

The status of Maori rugby players within the context of New Zealand and South African sporting links underlined the hollowness of New Zealand platitudes celebrating racial inclusion. Nonetheless, public dissent over the negation of Maori sporting rights took place within a wider political context of imperial loyalty. New Zealand and South African rugby contacts were seen by middle class New Zealand commentators (conservative politicians, press editors and sports officials) from an Anglocentric perspective. According to civic speeches, press releases and editorials, such contacts consolidated

links between countries with a common British heritage. New Zealand and South African rugby representatives were commonly portrayed as imperial ambassadors, or 'missionaries'. Realistically, All Black and Springbok rugby matches merely enacted an intense sporting rivalry. The individual players, furthermore, were not the ambassadors of Empire, but merely the cream of New Zealand and South African rugby.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the lion's share of imperialist investment in New Zealand and South African rugby relations was from New Zealand. It often displayed greater imperial loyalty than South Africa, especially within the sphere of British Empire politics. The 1926 Balfour Declaration recognised equality between Britain and the dominions, yet was 'deplored' by New Zealand political leaders. Furthermore, the Balfour Declaration's legislative equivalent, the 1931 Statute of Westminster, was not adopted by New Zealand until 1947. On the other hand, the Balfour Declaration and Statute of Westminster satisfied concurrent Afrikaner nationalist demands for South African political parity with Britain.

South African aversion to the imperialist character of rugby tours reflected traditional Afrikaner antipathy to the British Empire. Its enthusiasm for the Balfour Declaration and Statute of Westminster was linked clearly with the Hertzog Nationalist Government. Coinciding with the 1949 All Black tour, South Africa was governed by the

overtly pro-republican National Party. While the majority of SARB administrators were Anglos, they usually viewed rugby exchanges between the two countries as sporting events with internationalist overtones. Hence, South African sporting commentators utilised clichés such as the development of 'mutual friendships' between players and countries alike, during the 1928 and 1949 All Black tours.

Whereas New Zealand demonstrated a greater sense of identification with Empire than South Africa, imperialist sentiments were not universally held. New Zealand working class publications (such as the *Standard*) appeared reluctant to place New Zealand and South African rugby contacts within an imperialist framework. The majority of rugby supporters, moreover, viewed such events as merely sporting occasions without wider political meaning.

The zenith of imperialist investment in New Zealand and South African rugby relations was unquestionably the 1921 Springbok tour of New Zealand. It was the first sporting event for New Zealand and South Africa following the Great War. The Springbok players were eulogized to the extent that they were likened to royalty, instead of recognised simply as elite sportsmen. Imperial slogans were less evident during the 1928 All Black tour of South Africa. Sporting officialdom and conservative politicians spoke of the teams' upholding of 'Dominion honour'. Unlike the 1921 Springboks, the All Blacks were not likened to royalty, but were simply 'ambassadors'.

The social and political rhetoric of New Zealand commentators was often internationalist during the 1937 Springbok and 1949 All Black tours. Politically, New Zealand, through the first Labour Government, displayed greater independence in its external policy. On occasions, it disagreed with Britain on issues within the League of Nations. The British Empire Games, furthermore, had replaced rugby and cricket as the leading imperial sporting occasion. The Empire Games involved a greater number of competing nations, whereas rugby and cricket tours were initially confined to Britain, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia. The British Empire received little coverage during the 1937 tour, and rugby issues dominated the sporting press. On occasions, sporting commentators reverted to internationalist slogans such as 'mutual understanding and friendships' to depict the social outcome of the 1937 tour. Both imperialism and internationalism generated little comment from sporting commentators during the 1949 All Black tour of South Africa, as the denial of Maori sporting rights was the foremost question discussed.

An examination of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa to 1950 reveals that the cliché 'politics and sport do not mix' is ultimately illusive. Social and political issues are unquestionably entwined with international sporting events. Within the context of pre-1950 New Zealand and South African rugby exchanges,



race relations and imperialism were the dominant themes. Imperialism, however, declined as a key issue with the passing of each rugby tour. Imperial political relations between Britain and the Dominions (including New Zealand and South Africa) became increasingly informal throughout the inter-war years. Furthermore, the British Empire Games had become the pre-eminent device of the sporting Empire. Consequently, the press coverage of All Black and Springbok tours became strictly rugby-oriented without wider imperialist or internationalist connotations.

Race overtook imperialism as the dominant social and political question which underlined New Zealand and South African rugby contacts. Yet, it was defined narrowly to the negation of Maori sporting rights in relation to All Black teams to South Africa. Initially, few New Zealanders opposed the NZRFU's betrayal of the inclusionist tradition of New Zealand sport and society. By 1950, trade unions and war veterans' organisations, and many individual New Zealanders, opposed Maori exclusion from All Black teams to South Africa. However, the majority of New Zealand rugby followers failed to view Maori exclusion as a moral issue.

The negation of sporting and social rights for black South Africans was generally overlooked by those who demanded equal sporting rights for Maori and Pakeha. Discussion over the unequal status of black South Africans surfaced rarely during New Zealand and South African rugby tours before 1950. When it did, it was

inevitably within a social darwinist framework of the relative status of black South Africans, Maori, and Pakeha. Maori, on occasions, were described by social commentators as racially superior to black South Africans. Thus, South African suggestions of parity between the two were met with hostility from New Zealanders. Social darwinism, nonetheless, was prevalent among the Western world until the end of World War Two. European imperial powers governed the vast majority of African, Indian and South East Asian people of darker skin colour. Black Americans and South Africans were subjected to legal and social discrimination within the United States and South Africa respectively. Indeed, Maori suffered continued land appropriation and received lower state expenditure than Pakeha, despite the inclusionist rhetoric of New Zealand political commentators.

The social basis of rugby contacts between New Zealand and South Africa remained one of racial elitism following World War Two, despite the wartime discrediting of social darwinist ideas. South Africa, unlike the majority of Western nations, intensified white racial domination into apartheid. Maori rugby players, unlike their military peers, remained excluded from South Africa. Throughout the late twentieth century, South Africa became an international sporting, cultural, political and economic pariah. New Zealand rugby administrators, however, continued to pursue rugby

contacts with South Africa, at any cost. Public protests against Maori exclusion (and the 1960 Sharpeville massacre) failed to convince the NZRFU to cancel the 1960 All Black tour of South Africa.

Racial issues surrounding post-1960 New Zealand and South African rugby tours transcended Maori sporting rights, and centred on the denial of black South African sporting, social and political rights. Consequently, the inclusion of several players of Maori and Samoan lineage (as 'honorary whites') on the 1970 All Black tour of South Africa was overshadowed by apartheid. Local and international pressure contributed to the cancellation of the 1973 Springbok tour of New Zealand. Direct-action protests against the 1971 Springbok tour of Australia displayed the possible disturbances created by a similar tour of New Zealand. Furthermore, the 1974 Commonwealth Games (held at Christchurch) would be threatened by an African, Asian and West Indian sporting boycott if the 1973 tour proceeded.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, New Zealand society was divided on the question of sporting contacts with South Africa. Notwithstanding the 'sport and politics do not mix' banality, New Zealand and South African rugby contacts was a political tool for the National Party in its election victories of 1975 and 1981. National appealed to rugby followers, especially among its constituency of social conservatives, by allowing the 1976 All Black and 1981 Springbok tours to proceed. The

1981 tour demonstrated conclusively the wisdom of the 1973 Springbok tour's cancellation. New Zealand society was divided evenly along 'pro' and 'anti' tour lines. The lasting memory of 1981 was one of barbed wire, police batons and social polarisation, instead of rugby. New Zealand joined the rest of the world (albeit belatedly) in a sporting, cultural and economic boycott of South Africa, which continued until the post-1990 dismantling of apartheid.

As at 1996, New Zealand enjoys full sporting contacts with a democratic and 'non-racial' South Africa. The All Blacks' best team, irrespective of 'colour', plays a Springbok team which represents the non-racial South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU). While South African rugby remains dominated by whites, the current 'star' of Springbok rugby is the black winger, Chester Williams. Furthermore, over 50% of the current All Black team are of Maori and Pacific Island lineage. Nevertheless, the current scenario of discrimination-free rugby between New Zealand and South Africa took over seventy years to accomplish.

The exclusion of Maori rugby players from past All Black tours of South Africa raises the question of the status of Maori within New Zealand society. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi proposed equal citizenship for Maori and Pakeha. While the inclusionist ethos was considered by many as a national principle, it produced social

complacency and, at times, hostility. Furthermore, it remained vacuous without widespread evidence of tangible social and economic parity between Maori and Pakeha. Within New Zealand sport and society, the NZRFU consistently displayed scant regard to the inclusionist ethos of New Zealand society. Its negation of Maori sporting rights (and the idea of racial inclusion) to develop a sporting rivalry between New Zealand and South Africa may well be viewed as 'paternalist' from an early twentieth century perspective. However, within a contemporary social and political context, Maori exclusion from rugby football tours of South Africa was ultimately an act of NZRFU self-centredness and hypocrisy.

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